



DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

*In fact, some LGBTQ people are happy
that they criminalized homosexuality again*

A qualitative study about LGBTQ activism in Mumbai

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Abstract

Title: In fact, some LGBTQ people are happy that they criminalized homosexuality again. A qualitative study about LGBTQ activism in Mumbai.

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India is one of many countries in the world where homosexual acts are still illegal. India, however, represents a somewhat unusual development regarding the legal rights of lesbian-gay-bisexual-transsexual-queer (LGBTQ) people. From 1860 to 2009 "unnatural intercourse" (non-penile-virginal sex) was illegal under Section 377 of the Indian penal code. In 2009 Section 377 was read down, but was however reintroduced in 2013. The purpose of the present study was to investigate how LGBTQ activists perceived the relatively rapid change in the legal status. Eight semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ activists in Mumbai were conducted. The interviews covered both their own experiences and their knowledge of the situation of other LGBTQ individuals in society. In addition, the study aimed at, through the experiences of these informants, investigating the importance of Section 377 for their struggle of claiming the rights of LGBTQ people. The main finding was that the status of the law is central in explaining the social stigma and discrimination that LGBTQ individuals are subjected to on the basis of their sexual orientation. Furthermore, through the theoretical lens of queer and intersectional theory, I was able to emphasize that the legal status of LGBTQ people was not enough in explaining their vulnerable situation. The affiliation of different sets of social categories, the power exercised by different structures and societal norms was highly important, according to the activists, in understanding the situation of LGBTQ people. Therefore, the informants were ambiguous to the consequences, of the legal changes, for the LGBTQ activism.

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List of concepts

In this section I will present some definitions of terms and abbreviations that I will use in this study.

Activist: An individual who focus on to perform to bring social and political change and/or advocates concrete action (Gustafsson, 2016).

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization.

LGBTQ: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transsexual, Queer-sexual.

Ze/Hir/Hirself: Alternate pronouns that are gender neutral. They replace: he/she, his/hers and himself/herself respectively (Lesbians And Bisexuals In Action, 2013). These pronouns are used in the study since several of the informants did not want to be put in any label.

According to the informants these pronouns are common within the LGBTQ community in India.

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1. Introduction

The present study concerns the situation of LGBTQ activists in Mumbai. My interest for this subject started when attending a lecture at the University of Gothenburg. At this particular lecture, there was a guest teacher from India who spoke about LGBTQ people in India. Later on, when I searched for information about the LGBTQ movement in India, I found interesting information regarding Section 377, a law banning all non-penile-virginal sexual acts. The uniqueness of this law is related to its rapid de- and recriminalization. Between 2009 and 2013 homosexual acts were legal in India, until the Supreme Court reinforced the previous legislation. As I understand it, such quick judicial procedure is quite unusual. In, for example, Sweden the law banning unnatural fornication was dismissed in 1944 and never came back into force again, even though several claims were made in favor to re-criminalize homosexuality in the following decades (Rydström, 2001).

Several studies have been conducted focusing on how LGBTQ individuals perceive the decriminalization in India. However, few studies have explored how LGBTQ people perceive the process of de- *and* recriminalization. The present study aim to increase the understanding of what kind of consequences the rapid changes in legal status had and has for LGBTQ activists in Mumbai.

1.1 Problem area

Discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity is prohibited under human rights. In India homosexual acts are punishable under Section 377. LGBTQ individuals are therefore often subjected to social stigma and discrimination on the grounds of their sexual orientation, on many levels and sphere in society. LGBTQ people have been, and are still, subjected to threats and persecution by the police. However, the Delhi High Court released a judgement in July 2009 stating that prohibiting intimate relations between same-sex adults is unconstitutional and thereby read down parts of Section 377. But in December 2013 the Supreme Court held that Section 377 is not unconstitutional, which means that homosexual acts remains illegal in India (Regeringskansliets utrikesdepartement, 2014).

1.2 Purpose

The purpose of the present study is to explore in what way LGBTQ activists in Mumbai perceive the rapid change of Section 377. I aim to investigate what consequences, if any, legal changes have implied for LGBTQ activists prospects to perform their activism. Through the narratives of the informants, I furthermore aim to explore how the legal changes have influenced the situation of LGBTQ people and consequently the development of the LGBTQ movement. To be able to do this, I argue that, I have to gather information about how the LGBTQ activists describe their activism and motives to be an activist, since this may influence their experiences of the legal changes. The study focuses on the time between 2009 and 2015.

1.3 Research questions

1. How do LGBTQ activists describe their activism and motives for engaging in activism?
2. How do LGBTQ activists perceive that the legal changes have influenced the situation of LGBTQ people?
3. How do LGBTQ activists perceive that the legal changes have influenced their prospects to perform their activism?

1.4 Relevance for social work

Even if the present study does not directly target social work in India, I believe that it is of relevance for the field of social work. One of the main concerns within social work is to strive for positive societal change regarding inter alia norms and values related to sexuality. Consequently, it is of importance to investigate whether the legal changes have influenced the prospects of challenging the norms and values that influence the situation of LGBTQ activists.

Furthermore, by applying intersectional theory, I am able to investigate which LGBTQ individuals that are more vulnerable in society (cf. Mattson, 2015). Queer theory is also applied in present study since such a perspective provides an insight in how different norms are produced and reproduced (cf. Rosenberg, 2002). I argue that these perspectives are central to social work in order to reach an increased

understanding of the norms and structures of power that LGBTQ individuals are a part of in Mumbai. Such an investigation might serve as a foundation for social workers to organize help for those who need it the most. Moreover, as a social worker in India or in Sweden, this study might be useful in the strive for societal changes, providing an increased awareness of the opportunities and obstacles to work inclusive of sexualities and gender expressions.

2. Setting

In this section useful information will be presented, in order to understand the context of LGBTQ activism in India. Starting off with a resume of Section 377 and activism in India and subsequently briefly outline the LGBTQ people's situation.

2.1 Section 377

Section 377 was introduced in the 1860's during the British colonial rule of India. The law has its roots in the Judeo-Christian religious morality, which disapprove to non-procreative sex. The definition of this law is diffuse and has become subjected to varied judicial interpretation over the years. Initially the law covered only anal sex, to later on include oral sex and currently it covers penile penetration of other orifices such as between the thighs. All other acts than penile-virginal falls under this vague heading “unnatural offences”. According to the law, consent and the age of those who indulge in a sexual act is not relevant (Sharma and Das, 2011).

Section 377 unnatural offences read as:

Whoever voluntarily has carnal intercourse against the order of nature with any man, woman or animal shall be punished with imprisonment for life, or with imprisonment for either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable fine (Supreme Court of India, 2013:64).

2.1.2 The police's misuse of Section 377

Section 377 creates opportunities for the police to harass, extort and blackmail LGBTQ individuals. The law is also used to threaten LGBTQ persons with prison, which prevents them from seeking legal protection from violence. Yet there is no consistent source about how many, or if any, LGBTQ individuals that have get charged and put in jail under this law (Geetanjali, 2009). According to Gupta (2006) it is impossible to find a single reported case in the last 50 years where two adults have been punished for consensual homosexual sex in private in court. However, the existence of Section 377 has allowed the authorities to discriminate homosexuals and organizations working with them. Thus, Section 377 has a negative impact on many LGBTQ people's lives.

2.2 LGBTQ activism in India

Below there will be a short presentation of the legal struggle against Section 377 and about the LGBTQ movement in India.

2.2.1 The legal struggle

Section 377 has been challenged several times in court. The first petition against this law was filed in 1994 by an organization working on HIV prevention. During this period the HIV epidemic was widespread in India. This organization argued that the law banning sexual acts between two consenting adults has a negative impact on safe sex and also on the HIV prevention programs. But the petition was not even heard by court (Horton, Rydstrøm and Tonini, 2015).

In 2001, a second petition was filed in of the NGO Naz Trust Foundation (an organization working on HIV and sexual health issues). They argued that the law is unconstitutional since it is banning sexual acts between two consenting adults. These arguments were based on violation of right to privacy, dignity and health under Article 14 (“equality before law”), Article 15 (“the right to be free from sex discrimination”), Article 19 (“the right to fundamental liberties”) and Article 21 (“the right to life and privacy”) of the Constitution. The petition was dismissed by the Delhi High Court in 2004 due to lack of cause of action as no prosecution was pending against the petitioner (Geetanjali, 2009:23).

In 2005 the same petitioner left a special appeal to the Supreme Court of India. This resulted in a positive judgement saying that these matter needs to be investigated more and cannot be dismissed on previously specified grounds. The Supreme Court decided to return the case to the High Court and repeal previous decision. This resulted in a landmark judgment in 2009, holding that Section 377 in fact is violating to Article 14, 15 and 21 of the Constitution. Consensual sex between two adults in private was now repealed from Section 377 (Lawyers collective, 2014).

However, Section 377 was reintroduced in December 2013 by the Supreme Court. They decided that the decision of repealing Section 377 should be a matter for the parliament and not for the judiciary. They also declared that the law was not unconstitutional (Daleke, 2014).

2.2.2 Laboring for LGBTQ rights

According to Sharma and Das (2011) the LGBTQ activism in India is based on events such as the display of the film “Fire”, which was produced 1996. "Fire" is the first mainstream film in India which shows lesbian sex. In the middle of the 1990s organizations and community groups began to work on issues of sexual rights. This resulted in for example helplines for lesbians and gay men, training programs and public education on sexual rights.

Today several organizations are working for LGBTQ people's rights in India. Pride festivals are held in several big cities, there are gay activities such as film festivals, support groups and websites for LGBTQ matchmaking (Trivedi, 2014). In general, organizations are free to publish their content without interference from the authorities. However, even though the constitution of India assures citizens the right to form associations, there are several reports of threats against organizations working with LGBTQ people's rights (Regeringskansliet utrikesdepartement, 2014).

2.3 The situation of LGBTQ people in India

Trying to summarize the general situation of LGBTQ individuals comes with several implications. Thus, the information presented here should only be seen as examples of factors that may influence their situation and not as a general truth.

2.3.1 Societal norms affecting conditions of life

Since 2014 India is ruled by a conservative right-wing Party BJP (Daleke, 2015). BJP promotes the “traditional” way of constructing a family. As pointed out by Ramasubban (2007), a point of departure to discuss the situation for LGBTQ individuals in India is the perception and function of the family. The best ways for an individual to fulfil the duty to their family is by marrying a person of the opposite sex, of the same or a higher caste and have children, preferably sons (Daleke, 2014). Same-sex marriages have never been recognized in India, although, in 2011 during the period when homosexuality was legal, there has been one recognized lesbian marriage in the court of Gurgaon Haryana (Dash and Yaday, 2011).

Homophobic attitudes are common in India and (several) LGBTQ people face discrimination from their family, workplace, police or/and the community.

Generally there are more "open" attitudes against LGBTQ individual in major cities (Geetanjali, 2009). Many people deny the existence of sexual minorities in India, dismissing same-sex behavior as a Western and upper-class phenomenon. Others label it as a disease to be cured, an abnormality or a crime to be punished.

Therefore, homosexuals are often unwilling to reveal their sexual orientation to their families and friends. If some of them would reveal their sexuality, they would inter alia risk facing shock, denial, forced marriage, conversion or therapy to "cure them" (Peoples Union for Civil Liberties Karnataka, 2001). Some LGBTQ individuals therefore live a "double life". Furthermore, some of these individuals tend to have sex in public places since it is their only option. These meeting places are often exposing them to subjection by police persecution and even sexual abuse (Ramasubban, 2007).

In India transsexuals in general, in contrast to LGBQ individuals, are more accepted. Transsexuals have a special position in society (at least when it comes to males who address themselves and act as females). This group of transsexuals is also referred to as Hijras (PUCL-K, 2001). Hijras have their own form of social organization and are more tolerated in society, even though many Indians are suspicious against them. Traditionally, Hijras earn their living by blessing weddings and newborns, but now they are more and more forced into prostitution (Daleke, 2014). However, in 2014 they got a positive judgement, in the Supreme Court of India, introducing a "third gender" status for transgender and Hijras (Supreme Court of India, 2014).

3. Previous research

In this section I will provide an overview of previous research relevant for the present study. But first I will present how I found these research studies.

3.1 Sourcing literature

I have primarily used search engines, such as “GUNDA”, “LIBRIS”, “swepub”, “google scholar” and “supersök” in order to allocate relevant literature. Databases such as “ProQuest Social Sciences” were also used. The following search words have been used: LGBTQ, same-sex, activists, activism, India, Section 377 etcetera. These search word were combined in different ways, for example “LGBT” AND “activism” OR “activist”.

The search for literature resulted in various research about the subject of LGBTQ activism in India. However, these studies did not specifically discuss the same issues as present study. The previous research that I found relevant consists primarily of scientific articles, reports and books. Moreover, the informants informed me about relevant literature. A number of interesting studies was also found using the references of collected scientific articles or books. A lot of information was also provided in the training course in Härnesand by the NGO Sida. In preparing for my trip I also used the international web site “Landguiden”, to learn more about the everyday situation in India.

In the next section I will present the articles, reports and books, that I believe provides an overview of the situation of the LGBTQ community. These were chosen to highlight perspectives on the subject from different angles in order to attain a broad picture on previous research that relates to my study.

3.2 Indian queer activism- an ethical perspective

In 2001 Dave (2012), a PhD student from Michigan University, initiated an extensive ethnographic study which run over several years within PRISM, a collective laboring for queer rights in India. Dave explores the everyday activities that constitute queer activism in India by, inter alia, conducting a number of interviews with LGBTQ activists in urban areas. The author investigates Indian activism from an ethical perspective, trying to discern the underlying reason for their actions. Ze found that, Indian activists, act in the belief that they as a collective can

strive for justice. Their struggle is about challenging norms of gender, sexuality, the institution of family and marriage among other things. Furthermore, their struggle involves the task of discerning and questioning the existing relations of power that contribute to reproduce these norms.

Dave (2012) was able to identify that the process of normalization seem to be an unavoidable element of the activist movement. Ze argues that in the process of challenging norms, activists are to some extent forced into embrace the norms they want to deconstruct. Subsequently, new norms are created and invented out of this process of trying to present alternatives to these norms. Thus, Indian queer activists, when challenging processes of normalization, in part, reproduce those very practices and norms they object. Therefore, the author argues, that the activist movement runs the risk of imperiling their fundamental ethical objective.

3.3 Indian queer activism- a historical perspective

In a study by Ramasubban (2007), conducted in collaboration with Sexuality policy watch (a global forum composed of researchers and activists working to contribute to sexuality-related global policy debates), ze outlines the history of the LGBTQ movement by using primary and secondary document sources. Ramasubban describes the LGBTQ movement as a movement that question prevailing constructions of patriarchal gender relations and heteronormativity. A movement that is composed of people with non-normative sexualities who struggle against Section 377. However, Ramasubban argues that a broader coalition of groups and a broader political agenda focusing on sexual rights for everyone is needed. The agenda should criticize the patriarchal norms which subordinates women and sexual minorities.

In addition, Ramasubban (2007) identifies several events that ze argue escalated the activists struggle in fighting restrictive constructions of gender and sexuality, which brought even more sexual minorities together. As for example the HIV epidemic, the screening of the movie “Fire”, the arrestment of NGO workers in Lucknow and the opposition against the law. The opposition against the law resulted in that different groups of sexual minorities got together in an increasingly organized movement. More information was exchanged between different organizations, resulting in an increased cooperation against the law and the campaign “Voices

Against 377” (in 2003), consisting of LGBTQ and non-LGBTQ groups.

Furthermore, Ramasubban (2007) found that lower class activists are, due to their lack of literacy and knowledge, disadvantaged in terms of participation in changing the legal processes, leaving the leadership of the movement to educated activists working in big cities.

Similar results were found by Geetanjali (2009) who is Director of CREA (a feminist human rights organization based in New Delhi). The aim of Geetanjali's study was to identify a coherent picture of the battle against Section 377, the outcomes of the law being read down and future challenges. By using secondary sources, Geetanjali discusses areas in which changes are needed after the decriminalization, areas such as the institution of marriage, adoption and societal attitudes of homosexuality. In order to change societal opinion the author emphasizes the importance of human rights and tolerance of differences being taught in schools. Media reporting responsible on LGBTQ issues is also of significance when fostering a culture of tolerance around sexuality. According to Geetanjali, the years of activism before 2009, media reporting about LGBTQ issues, and several other events have resulted in more open discussions about sexual rights. These discussions are viewed as, a starting point, that opens up for possibilities to change public opinion.

In a study conducted by eleven researchers, from different feminist queer collectives in India (LABIA, 2013), they identify, in compliance with Geetanjali, several areas that need to be targeted in order to improve the situation of LGBTQ individuals. Furthermore, the researchers emphasize that these changes should be done in consultation with queer and transpeople in order to avoid approaches to be patriarchal, transphobic or homophobic. The study was conducted during 2009 – 2010, by inter alia interviewing 50 queer activists that assigned themselves the female gender at birth, using a feminist critical research approach. The aim of the study was to explore and to bring important inputs to the discussions regarding sexual and gender identity, both within the LGBTQ community and the LGBTQ activist movement. This was done in order to enable them to better plan their activist work and interventions. In the narratives of their informants it became clear that they, when talking about themselves, constantly were referring to the heteronorm. The conclusions that are made is inter alia the importance of broadening the concept of gender and creating space for what can be included in a gender

category, to not label individuals based on prejudices and to accept all bodies regardless of how they look or perform gender. Furthermore, the researchers identify several areas where interventions are needed, such as family relations. Even if the law was on their side, only three of their informants were able to live openly with their sexual and gender identity and to be accepted by their families.

3.4 Different outcomes among subgroups

In comparison to LABIA's study The NGO Humsafar trust (an organization promoting LGBTQ rights in India), in support by HIV/AIDS alliance in India, conducted a research report studying more specifically different outcomes of the decriminalization within communities of sexual minorities. The authors Prabhugate and Srivastava (2011) aimed at exploring positive and negative consequences connected to the decriminalization. The study is conducted through several methods with members of non-normative communities in India; 146 internet surveys, 10 interviews on camera (with individuals from the internet survey who were willing to speak) and consultation with 60 other individuals.

They found that both female and male participants felt that other people are more open to speak about sexuality and sexual preferences after the decriminalization. The informants also felt like members of the LGBTQ community were more approachable. Transgender individuals reported better access to community-based organizations, decreased harassment and that they could talk to the police. The authors consider the differences in the replies between male, female and transgender as an indicator of how different subgroups face different issues in society. For example, transgender people are seen as especially marginalized because of their often low socioeconomic status and the stigma and harassments they face due to their gender expression.

A complementary point of view of the outcomes of the legal changes within the LGBTQ community is presented by Dhall and Boyce (2015). Their research was conducted in order to produce evidence-based practical options to strengthening legal protection of LGBTQ people. In their study they wanted to obtain a greater insight in how people with non-normative genders and sexualities are included in the government poverty alleviation programs and other social security services. The study is conducted by a literature review and by interviews with individuals

identifying as non-normative genders and sexualities, government officials and NGO: s working at social security issues.

Overall, the study of these researchers has captured many aspects and views about different types of exclusion of LGBTQ sub-communities. For example, the government fails to protect children with non-normative genders and sexualities from dropping out of school due to stigma, discrimination and violence. Furthermore, they note that distinctions were made between different groups among people with non-normative sexualities and genders when it came to HIV prevention within the public health sphere.

In the study concerns and thoughts about future approaches on the work of inclusiveness of LGBTQ communities are raised. They claim that, in spite of Section 377, the government should take its social responsibility. The government's services have to be more accessible for people with non-normative genders and sexualities. Moreover, there need to be a comprehensive anti-discrimination law in place. The authors argue that decriminalization is just one aspect of a larger battle against discrimination against sexual minorities (Dhall and Boyce, 2015). This statement is shared by several researcher; inter alia Geetanjali (2009).

In conclusion, several of the studies presented above do have connections to researchers that are directly or indirectly engaged in the activist movement on LGBTQ issues. I do however not view this fact in a negative light, even though it might be considered as biased since these researchers explore this field of research with similar agendas, (arguing that individuals should not be discriminated based on sexual identity). On the contrary, I argue that by choosing studies written by activists increase their relevance for my study since I am interested in the experiences of LGBTQ activists. Finally, the conclusions that are made in these studies were often similar to other studies that I have read through but with different focus.

4. Method of research

In this section I will present the research method that is applied in this study, considerations during the study, information about the informants and ethical aspects. I will introduce by describing the working process of this study.

4.1 Distribution of work

I started this research together with my classmate Anika Ritter. The empirical data was gathered and the transcriptions were composed by both of us. Anika wrote parts of the introduction, background and previous research. The remaining parts are written by me. Due to personal circumstances we decided to conduct two separate studies. Anika will however use the jointly gathered material in her future study. Consequently, the reader will find both "we" and "I" in this section.

4.2 Qualitative research method

The present study applies a qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ activists in Mumbai. Qualitative research is used as a tool in feminist and critical research to promote the reclaiming and validation of the experiences of marginalized groups in society. This is done by listening to disadvantaged groups and to take part of their experiences (Kitzinger, 2004), as in my case LGBTQ activists. By collecting the data through interviews, I can explore people's thoughts, attitudes and experiences from their own point of view. This method also enable me to take part of fuller and richer stories and experiences that I would not be able to grasp through pre-formulated questions, as in for example a questionnaire study (Ahrne and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2011).

4.3 Semi-structured interviews

A semi-structured interview implies a certain freedom for the researcher. Questions that are not included in the interview guide may be asked, there is always an opportunity to ask the questions in a different order and with different wordings (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). This method does also allow the researcher to be open for the informants' own way of telling which can be seen as respectful and important from an ethical point of view (Kalman, Lövgren and Sauer, 2012).

Furthermore, by conducting semi-structured interviews I was given the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding by using follow-up questions. This enabled me to get a clearer view of what the informants meant by certain terms, giving them the opportunity to explain it according to how they experienced different events (cf. Backman et al., 2012).

Since I did not know what different experiences LGBTQ activists would have, I believed that it was appropriated to use open-ended questions. Most of the questions were formulated as “how-questions”, aiming at exploring how the informants experienced various situations (cf. Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). I and Anika also used clarifying questions in order to collect material as free as possible from our own interpretation. In addition, we tried to pose interpreting questions: we rephrased and repeated back the informant’s answers, to make sure that we interpreted their answer in a satisfying way.

The interview guide was based on the purpose of the study and was arranged under six main themes (see Appendix 3). The questions were re-designed several times during the working process to get accurate and well-formulated questions that would fit into the cultural context. This was done in collaboration with our mentor (the guest lecturer who visited our University of Gothenburg) in Mumbai working with LGBTQ rights. Ze provided us with some good advices for the formation of the interview guide.

4.4 Selection of informants

For several reasons the selection and recruitment of informants (not least in terms of access) could be a difficult process. This is perhaps especially difficult when travelling abroad to conduct a study, and furthermore, since the study is dealing with a rather sensitive topic. The only criteria that we had for participating in the study were that the informants had to be LGBTQ and engage in activism. Finally, the material was derived from eight individual semi-structured interviews with LGBTQ activists from Mumbai, conducted during October 2015. Below I will present how we came in contact with the informants.

The mentor in Mumbai is working on LGBTQ rights in India and has therefore several connections with LGBTQ activists. Ze connected us with six of the informants. Lalander (2011) call this kind of approach “door-opener”. One can say

that the “door-opener” uses ze’s status to help the researchers to “sell” the project idea to their contacts. The mentor was important for us to be able to find informants because of the illegal status of homosexuality. Furthermore, two informants were contacted through so called “snowball sampling”. These two informants were found through two students at the University where we stayed in Mumbai (cf. Ahrne and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2011).

Before collecting the data, we e-mailed the mentor and the two students a document with information about the study (see Appendix 1). This document was forwarded to their contacts. The document was formulated as to portray the informants as experts on this issue and as we were eager to learn about this subject. I argue that this could contribute to level the power inequality that may exist between the informant and the researcher (cf. Ahrne and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2011).

The data was collected through seven face-to-face interviews. The eighth interview was done over email, since this informant did not have the opportunity to meet up with us. There were not much difference in the amount of information we retrieved from the e-mail interview but there were less information about ze’s background and emotions (see 5.1).

Unfortunately, the use of “door openers” and “snowball sampling” comes with some methodological implications, mainly because the researcher is not in control of the recruitment. However, in qualitative research, one have to question whether the researcher ever has the possibility to control the recruitment, since it always is up to the informants to decide. Furthermore, the fact that the mentor and the students initiated the first contact with the informants, imposes a risk of ending up with informants that have more homogene experiences (since they know each other), which can lead to less nuanced results (cf. Ahrne and Eriksson-Zetterquist, 2011). To avoid this we asked them to not contact people in their circle of acquaintances. By explaining to the mentor and the students that we wished to see some distribution when it comes to sexual and gender identity, class and education. The informants ended up representing a rather dispersed group (see 4.9).

4.5 Conducting interviews

The interviews took place in environments that the informants chose. This is favorable since it is a secure environment for the interviewee. Both of us were present in each interview but alternately one of us were the primarily interviewer while the other one took notes, in case that something would go wrong with the audio taping. Before we started the interviews we defined the situation by explaining briefly about the purpose of the interview, the use of tape recorders and asked if the interviewee had any questions (cf. Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). Each interview lasted approximately 50 to 80 minutes.

The informants that we interviewed face-to-face, were talkative and seemed excited to be a part of our research. One explanation might be that they felt comfortable since we were new to this subject and that we were situated in their home town. Maybe they felt like they were teaching us about the subject and noticed our great interest. Occasionally during the interviews we did not have to ask all the questions in the interview guide, because the informants sometimes had already covered them in previous answers. We ended the interviews by asking the informants if they wanted to add something to what has been said or if they had any questions. When the informants confirmed that they were satisfied with everything we finished the interview.

4.6 Processing the material

In order to present the interviews accurately, the material gained from the sound-records was literally transcribed verbatim. Pronunciations, body language, pauses and so on, were not taken into consideration. This was excluded since we were interested in what was said and not *how* it was said. Transcribing interviews could include several implications. The process of going from a face-to-face interview to recorded sound and to written text may change some of the nature of the interview. For example, when transcribing, the researcher have already begun analyzing and interpreting the material. Consequently, the reader of the present study will only be able to take part of an interpreted version of the informant's answers (an issue that will be clarified later in section 4.8) (cf. Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009).

4.6.1 Developing codes

When all the transcripts were finalized I read through the transcripts carefully. In my second reading I started coding the material by identifying keywords. These keywords may cover one word, an expressed emotion or a whole collocate of text. This process of “sentence concentration” enabled me to concentrate the content about what was said during the interviews and to identify subjects that connect to the aim of the study (cf. Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). In this first open coding I did not single out any keywords. Here, to a large extent as possible, I avoided to impose my own ideas on the material. However, it is “virtually impossible for the researcher to banish all prior thoughts from the analysis” (Cook and Crang, 2007:139).

Subsequently, I conducted a second coding, making sure that the keywords were satisfactory. The meaning of each code was written down on a separate paper, defining concepts such as “Difference in safety”, with the relating quote attached: “My personal believes is that the violence has been the same, it is just supported more by media especially after the recriminalization”.

In this process, I identified codes that fell out in relation to the aim of the study. For example, keywords which contained information about other things that did not concern the interview question. These codes were assembled in a separate file. Due to the comprehensive material that was transcribed (120 pages), and to the limited space given here, many codes were unfortunately wasted.

As keywords recur, although in different versions, the same coding can be used, and a pattern begins to take shape. Presumably, one could say that I then had completed my initial open coding and instead started to encode more restricted. This does not, however, imply that I only portrayed the most common codes. The codes that might contradict this pattern are also portrayed (cf. Rennstam and Wästerfors, 2011).

4.6.2 Developing themes

Both the common codes and the ones that break the pattern were assembled in an overview, interview for interview. I matched codes that fit together, taking all transcripts into consideration. These codes constituted different themes that were assembled under different main themes. I developed themes that were, to the extent

possible, mutually exhaustive, so that codes and the appendant quote only could be put under one theme (cf. Cook and Crang, 2007). However, this was not always possible, some codes were put under two or more themes. This resulted in three main themes and six sub-themes. To make sure that the right code is placed under the right theme, I made an overview describing the criteria for what kind of information that was suitable under each theme. In order to do this systematically, each informant were given a letter and each quote where given a number. This enabled me to trace which context the code was derived from.

4.6.3 Constructing and analyzing themes

When the thematization was finished I undertook a different type of analysis, namely reflecting upon and theorizing the results from the interview. This qualifies as an inductive approach, not starting off with a theoretical lens. Instead, I applied theories in order to make sense of the material (cf. Svensson, 2011). This was done in a systematic way by focusing on one theme at time. On the basis of my material I aimed to look for patterns using theory. These patterns were subsequently appreciated in my analysis using theory to highlight the perspective of LGBTQ activists within this specific context. Thus, my study is not based on a hypothesis, instead patterns emerge from the empirical data.

4.7 Conducting research abroad

When doing cross-cultural interviews, it can be difficult to obtain knowledge about the variety of cultural factors that affect the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. By conducting studies abroad I got aware of my own cultural understanding.

According to Cook and Crang (2007) there are, embedded in our use of language, a set of assumptions, emotions and values, which can cause misunderstandings. As we conducted the interviews in English, which is not our nor the informants' first language, there were a few incidents where we did not understand each other. Although, when we did not understand properly, the informants explained it for us. We did not use a translator simply because the informants spoke English well. Besides, according to Cook and Crang (2007), a translator could potentially add yet another set of assumptions, emotions and values, causing even more

misunderstandings. Non-verbal factors can also lead to misunderstandings in terms of different norms for how to interact with strangers, appropriate use of language and social accepted behavior (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). During our stay in Mumbai (one month), we spend a lot of time among the locals, trying to grasp the "cultural codes".

With all these implications in mind we tried to express ourselves in a concrete way to avoid use of language characterized by underlying assumptions, emotions or values. Yet insurance was made by talking about these issues with the mentor in Mumbai. Ze's advices enabled us to formulate the interview questions and perform a code of conduct that would not be interpreted as offensive or unsuitable.

4.8 To ensure quality in qualitative study

In this chapter, I will describe how I have secured quality in the study.

4.8.1 Preconceptions

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2009), it is important that the researcher is aware of ze's preconceptions. Such awareness enables the researcher to acknowledge oneself to be positioned in the field of research. That ze is never detached from these preconceptions. Furthermore, Cook and Crang (2007) argue that we all enter the field with prejudices and expectations about the people and the context, which in turn influence the interpretations of them. In addition to my own cultural understanding, I am highly influenced by the understanding of human beings and societies derived from my education in social work. Furthermore, I am raised in a country where homosexuality is legal. Since I have not been to India before, my cultural understanding of India is colored by media and movies. How these issues have been taken into consideration is presented in section 4.5.

What is also important to highlight here is that the informants also bring their preconceptions to the interview situation, and possibly have personal reasons for being a part of the study. Thus, just as the researcher is not detached from ze's preconceptions, one has to understand that the informants also bring their cultural understanding and preconception about the researcher to the interview (Cook and Crang, 2007). In order to try to explore these, we prepared ourselves by reading up on the situation of LGBTQ people in India and by stating interview questions that invited them to tell us about their cultural background.

4.8.2 Reliability, validity and generalization

According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2009), one way to ensure quality throughout the study is to show transparency in procedure and in considerations that has been made, in other words to ensure reliability. The process of this study has been described in detail, which enables other researchers to follow the procedure.

However, when presenting the results I occasionally had to adjust the language of the informant's statements so that they would be presented in a fair way (cf. Ahrne and Eriksson Zetterquist, 2011). Furthermore, I had to adjust the order of words or take away or change words in the quotes to protect the informant's anonymity (cf. Ahrne and Svensson, 2011). Throughout, I have made my interpretations of the empirical data explicit, by clearly stating when I, in presenting the results, have reformulated or summarized their answers in my own words and when quoting (cf. Cook and Crang, 2007).

In order to ensure validity, the researcher must throughout control that the results are within the purpose of the study. It is also important that the primary meaning of the informant's answers not are lost, but retold in an accurate way (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). When suitable I therefore, when presenting the results, included the connected interview question.

When the result from a study can be qualified as credible (reliability) and satisfactory (validity), the issue remains whether the results can be transferred and applicable to other areas and contexts. However, in qualitative interview studies, the findings are connected to different contexts, and therefore not suitable for generalization (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). One must understand that in the interview situation the preconceptions of researcher and respondents converge. When bringing these preconceptions to the interview situation both researcher and informants are "equally involved in the changing social and cultural relations" that emerge in the interview situation (Cook and Crang, 2007:8). Building on the above, my results should not be seen as a product that can be reproduced, neither by me or other researchers. In addition, this study does not intend to explain general patterns, it rather aims to give an account of LGBTQ activists' experiences.

4.9 Information about the informants

In this section the informants will be presented. Due to my responsibility of protecting the informants' anonymity, I have restricted the presentation to not cover which organization they are active within. Furthermore, instead of presenting the informants one by one I have assembled the information about them, covering issues of age, class, gender and sexual identity, years as activists and their occupation. The informants are also given fictional names: Simone, Carl, Mary, Adam, Chris, Gary, Patric and Sara.

4.9.1 Age and occupation

The informants' age range from 22-45 years, resulting in an average age of 30. They all have some form of higher education (at least bachelor degree). They belong to different areas of work: journalist, professor/teacher, student, researcher, lawyer and founder member of an organization working for LGBTQ rights. All of the informants describe themselves as belonging to middle- or higher class.

4.9.2 Gender and sexual identity

Three of the informants identify themselves with their assigned gender; man and homosexual. One informant identifies himself both as a man and as a queer person. Another informant preferred to be addressed by ze's assigned gender as a female, but did also identify herself as a queer woman. The sixth informant preferred to be addressed by ze's name and not by gender. Two of the informants identify themselves as a genderqueer or as gender fluent individuals, viewing themselves as individuals who do not fit into any label.

4.9.3 Time as activists and type of activism

The informants told me that they have worked for LGBTQ people rights between 2-17 years (resulting in average time of 9,5 years). They are lobbying at arenas ranging from individual to international level, including different areas such as schools, healthcare, within the juridical world and within the research field. Hence, my study has access to a wide range of knowledge about activism, since the informants perform in different spheres.

Informants who primarily act on an individual level were mainly trying to talk to people and convince them that LGBTQ is natural. Another informant is working on a national level, at the ministry of social justice and empowerment in India. This ministry work for marginalized sexual minorities rights. One of the informants had produced a video talking about LGBTQ issues, which was translated into several languages. This movie got famous worldwide and was discussed during a panel of United Nations.

In the matter of different areas of work three of the informants had been working for transgender rights, for example, self-helping groups and governmental work. Two informants are journalists and have been active within media and on the internet. Another informant also write a blog, which deals with the intersections of gender, sexuality and other human rights issues being faced by minorities in India.

Several of the informants have done some kind of research connected to LGBTQ issues. One informant is a member of an organization at the school area, working with anyone who argues that equal rights are important. Another informant is working as a public civil rights lawyer trying to break the hegemonic view on sexuality and to change the status quo in the legal system.

In general, several of the informants participate in advocacy activities, like the pride parade, campaigns and other kinds of protests. Several of the informants are active within organizations that run activities to support the LGBTQ people's rights in different ways, for example support for aid applicants, producing LGBTQ magazines, calling for workshops and providing safe spaces for LGBTQ persons to meet and talk about their issues. Finally, they have one thing common; they are all working hard to promote the rights of LGBTQ people in India.

4.10 Limitations of the study

Due to the hardship of finding interviewees willing to participate, we failed to involve individuals who identify as transsexual and LGBTQ individuals belonging from lower-class. The final result is a group of individuals who define themselves as male, female, gender fluent, queer, gay, lesbian, queer sexual and from middle-class to upper-class. Consequently, my study does not represent experiences from transsexuals' or LGBTQ individuals from lower class. However, some of the informants did refer to the situation of transsexuals and LGBTQ individuals from

lower-class (less privileged position in the society). These limitations are however a result of the fact that the selection of informants was partly out of our control. Therefore, even though it is relevant, it is hard to speculate in why they choose these individuals.

Although, the criteria to participate in our study was being engaged in LGBTQ activism, I wished to have had more diversity when it comes to sexual, gender identity and class. However, I am grateful for the informants that did participate.

5. Research ethics

I have conducted interviews with individuals that may, due to their relatively disadvantaged position in their society, be seen as vulnerable. Hence, my study implies a consideration of specific research ethics. I have followed the ethical advice from the Swedish Research Council (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002), which could be summarized into four main principles. The first principle is the so called “information requirement”. This requirement was fulfilled in the recruitment process, where potential informants were provided a document in which we presented the aim of the study and under which conditions they would participate (see Appendix 1).

The second principle is “requirement of consent” which aims to ensure that the decision to participate is based on sufficient and adequate information about the study. After the informants had agreed to participate, we therefore provided them with a document called informed consent (see Appendix 2), with further information about the study. According to Brinkmann and Kvale (2009), it is important that the informants are given the opportunity to read the documents and contemplate on possible questions that they might have. During each interview, we also shortly summarized the informed consent and asked the participants if they had any questions. We also emphasized their right to not answer questions, to abruptly end the interview whenever and that they have the right to withdraw the consent at any time. All the informants gave us vocal consent.

The third principle is about confidentiality, meaning that the researcher has to protect the participants from exposure and from being identified by outsiders when the research is published (Svedmark, 2012). This is particularly important when it comes to informants that in one way or another can be considered as vulnerable. The risk that individuals may inadvertently be identified has to be considered when weighing the value of the expected knowledge contribution towards potential negative consequences for the informants (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002).

The last main principle is the “requirement of utilization”. This requirement states that the material should only be used for the intended purpose. I fulfilled this requirement by destroying the recordings and transcripts when the study was completed. Furthermore, the data was always stored so that no unauthorized person could access it (cf. Nygren, 2012). The informants were also given a copy of the study.

The researcher shall always be aware of the dilemmas that can arise and affect the informants and have plans for how to handle different unexpected events (Brinkmann and Kvale, 2009). In order to ensure such awareness, we initiated a dialogue with the participants concerning what information they were willing to share (cf. Svedmark, 2012). In the present study some unexpected events actually did arise, which I will discuss in the following section.

5.1 Ethical dilemmas

According to Thornquist (2012) research about social conditions can contribute to legitimize or delegitimize the prevailing norms and opinions in society. A study also runs the risk of reinforcing stereotypes that already exists (Wolanik boström and Öhlander, 2012). These conflicting issues were taken into consideration when choosing an appropriate theoretical framework. Consequently, my analysis is based on theories that highlight those power structures that may influence LGBTQ activists' situation in India. By choosing theories that aims at discerning power structures, I argue that I avoid the risk of reinforcing or reproducing the informants as "others".

In addition, according to the research requirements, it would be unethical to refrain from conducting research in fields that holds the possibility of, for example, improving people's health and living conditions and/or eliminating prejudices (Vetenskapsrådet, 2002). With reference to Mattson (2015), I argue that by highlighting subordinated voices and giving them legitimacy, my study has the potential to strengthen the informants' positions and rights in society.

However, in spite of this positive incentive, a few ethical dilemmas were identified. As already mentioned, we found the informants through a "door-opener" and "snowball sampling". This methodological approach may compromise the informant's anonymousness since other individuals (besides us) knows who had participated in the study. We did talk about this issue with the informants and they told us that this was not a problem for them, since they trusted that person.

Another dilemma that I identified involved a clash between the ethical principles and a specific requirement from one of the informants. The informant wanted to be presented with ze's real name, arguing that the participation in the study was a part of ze's activism, (the rest of the informants wanted to be anonymous). After

discussing this issue, we came to the agreement that all participants should be presented with fictional names and that information which could lead to recognition should be left out. It could be considered unethical to not follow the informant's explicit wish, but since the researcher's responsibility for the informants extends long-term, I have to ensure that participation in the study do not put them into any danger.

5.2 Power relations in interviews

Kvale (2006) argue that critical social scientist often stress that interviews may contribute to the empowerment of the oppressed by highlighting their stories. Furthermore, she views interviews as a form of conversation that is hierarchically arranged and where the interviewer sets the stage and scripts in accord with the research interests. As researcher we dominate the interview situation and retain control of the later use of the knowledge produced. Hence, we decide how our informants are to be portrayed in the results.

Cook and Crang (2007:26) argue that "research is always bound up in issues of power". However, according to Kvale (2006) the researcher can level power inequalities (that might result from this hierarchy) by avoiding imposing one's ideas during the interview. Thus, by being sensitive to these power relations and make it clear that we only want to take part of their experiences, we can empower them to tell their story. During the interview we tried to uncover assumptions, and to make explicit what the interviewee might have left implicit, by summarizing and repeating back what they had shared with us and asked if we have understood them correctly. These precautions were made in order to assure that we portrayed the informants as truthfully as possible (cf. Kvale 2006).

What is also important to consider, when conducting interviews, is the so-called interviewer effect. A effect were the informants try to satisfy the researcher and give information that they think fit the researcher's values and opinions (Kalman, Lövgren and Sauer, 2012). It is difficult to know in what way we, as two women from a western country where homosexuality is legal, influenced the relationship between the informants and us. I am aware of that there sure are cultural and power differences between us. Moreover, the fact that we were two researcher and only one interviewee might have resulted in an unequal power relation, which could have

affected the interviewee's answers. In despite of this awareness we decided to both be present in the interviews in order to gain a mutual understanding of the material. However, LGBTQ individuals in India can be seen as a vulnerable group, but instead of sticking to this restricting categorization, I embraced the fact that the informants are activists. Activists that can be considered as relatively socially mobilized group. In addition, the informants also describes themselves as more privileged in comparison to other LGBTQ persons in India, which strengthen their position and might have equal the power relation between us.

When talking with Indian students, conducting research on similar issues, they explained that they had difficulties finding participants for their studies. This made me reflect about whether it might have been more compelling for the informants to participate in our study than in an Indian study. Maybe they wanted to participate in this study because they wanted to get their voices heard by an outsider that would be able to spread their message outside the borders of India.

6. Theoretical framework

In this part I will present my theoretical framework that primarily focuses on critical theories. When choosing a theoretical framework, it was essential to choose a framework that would enable me to analyze the empirical data in an explorative way that would not depict the informants as a homogenous group. The first theory that will be presented below is queer theory. I argue that this theoretical perspective enables me to critically study and analyze the societal norms that LGBTQ activists in India are trying to challenge. Subsequently, I will present the theory of intersectionality, a theory that will enable me to conduct a dynamic analysis of power structures.

6.1 Queer theory

Within queer theory the word *queer* does not refer to a sexual identity. It rather refers to a position an individual is actively taking or put in, in relation to the prevailing norms in society. This position is considered to be marginalized due to sexual performance or identification of gender (Jagose, 1996). It is the departure from prevailing sexual norms, structures and identities in society that are central to queer theory (Rosenberg, 2002).

According to queer theory, gender is constructed in specific historical and cultural contexts. Thus, there are no true, constant or natural gender concealed under the socially constructed gender. Instead, gender is considered as an on-going performance, performed through symbolic actions and the use of language. Hence, masculinity and femininity can be found in different "typical gender actions". Heterosexuality is normalized simply because men and women, often unwarily, continually reproduce these "typical gender actions" (Butler, 1990, 1993).

In addition to the heteronormative way to perform gender, men and women are expected to desire and have sex with each other (Ambjörnsson, 2006). According to Ambjörnsson (2006:52) the heteronormative discourse refers to "the institutions, laws, structures, relations and actions that uphold heterosexuality as something uniform, natural and universal."

The objective of queer theory is to investigate the underlying mechanisms by which heterosexuality is reproduced and transformed into the norm system as desirable and taken for granted. In addition, queer theory is used

to analyze what kind of consequences the prevailing norm has for individuals' perceptions of their sense of identity (Rosenberg, 2002).

Rosenberg (2002) explains that the heteronorm is actively normalizing, in other words, those who do not follow the heterosexual norm are seen as odd, divergent, perverted or even sick. In addition, he emphasizes that, heteronormativity is built upon two leading principles: the exclusion and inclusion of divergence. Underlying that normativity not only upholds the difference between "us" and "them" through excluding the divergent, but also confiscates the divergent in terms of what can be thought of as normal. Inclusion of divergence within the norm manifests through a kind of "reserved acknowledgement" where the divergent is allowed to be included in the norm, as long as it is not talked about or made visible (Rosenberg, 2002).

6.1.1 Normalization, subversivity and social pressure

Normalization is the process through which we come to see something as normal or even natural. Norm creation is often a very unconscious process and norms become most clear when we break them. Gender being performative does not mean that an individual can act freely, although there is always room for subversion within the performative. There are no perfect reproductions of male or female and through small shifts in the performance of gender, the individual can resist the forcing norms of the "normal" behavior for masculinity and femininity (Butler, 1993). Such acts have, however, consequences. If, for instance, a woman chooses to perform an expected masculine body language she takes the risk of being subjected to social pressure or maybe even violence (Gemzöe, 2002).

The identities and actions that are seen as threatening the heteronormative hegemony do, however, implicate subversive opportunities for change. These subversive actions show that people can organize their sexual lives and identities in different ways than prescribed and that heteronormativity is not desired by everyone (Kulick, 2005). Subversive repetition reveals the fact that the "original" is a construction (Butler, 2007).

6.1.2 The queer norm- a paradox

Even though queer theory aims to challenge and deconstruct prevailing norms in society, the queer community is not free from norms. Queer itself can, according to

Haggren Idevall (2011), be seen as a categorization where a community of practices is created and that, in turn, gives space to constructions of queer identities. Norms are developed in all communities of practice in order to unify the members of the group and to construct the structure for the joint engagement. The queer norm creates social rules for what is socially accepted behavior, appearance and so on in a queer context (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992).

Considering that queer is never fully inclusive (since criteria's and norms are constructed for who can be identified as queer), it runs the risk of creating a static and general queer truth or identity, the very thing that queer theory objects (Haggren Idevall, 2011). However, as demonstrated in Haggren Idevall's (2011) study, queer has the potential to be inclusive if set identities or categories are excluded from the definition of queer (and not reproduced).

6.2 Intersectional theory

In my empirical data I have, in addition to gender and sexuality, identified other categories and power structures that the informants have touched upon during the interviews. Therefore, I saw the need to deepen the theoretical framework. By conducting an intersectional analysis I will be able to recognize LGBTQ activists as a heterogeneous group. That they have different experiences and possess different sets of social categories, which are important to take into account in the analysis (Mattson, 2015). I will therefore conduct, what Mehrotra (2010) describes as an inter-categorical analysis.

Within intersectional theory, social categories are used as an analytical concept that relates to a constructed group (Mattson, 2015). Intersectional theory emphasizes that different sets of categories should not be seen as separate. Instead, they should be seen as interdependent. For example, it would be misleading to state that one of the informants is vulnerable due to ze's sexual identity. Other categories such as class, age and caste must be taken into consideration in order to explain how inequalities arise and in which way power is exercised (cf. de los Reyes, 2015).

Intersectional theory highlights how the exercise of power and inequality is connected to attributions that are based on the affiliation of categories such as gender, sexuality, class and age (de los Reyes and Mulinaris, 2005). From the perspective of intersectional theory, the concept of power structures can be described

as forces in society that create social categories and arrange them in relation to each other. Power structures operate on a general and structural level in society, but at the same time they are sustained by our institutions, actions and ideas. Such a recognition does however imply that we are able to influence them through our actions and choices.

Power structures can be thought of as an integrated part of our everyday life. For instance, it is considered to be self-evident that a man and a woman should desire one another according to the power structure of sexuality. In general, we tend to not question the structure itself, rather, we question those who violate it.

Power structures that exist in society are accustomed and well known for us. This also means that when we realize them or have to face them, we do not always want to change them. An individual can feel safe in the position ze is in, even if this position is subordinated. Here, exceptions of vulnerability can be used to obscure power and oppression. However, this does not refute that LGBTQ individuals are faced with structural inequality and injustice. This rather clarifies that there are particular LGBTQ individuals that challenge these structures.

Through awareness about that different power structures are dependent on each other, intersectionality opens up for opportunities to resolve limitations between different social categories. Attention can be pointed towards how they constitute, intervene and transform each other. In this way, an intersectional analysis aims at conducting a complex and dynamic analysis of power structures (Mattson, 2015). According to Mattson (2015), power structures can be challenged by highlighting alternative and subordinated voices and giving them equal legitimacy, which I hope to do in this study.

7. Results and analysis

We have reached the part where I will present the results of the interviews. The results are organized according to three main themes: Being a LGBTQ activist in Mumbai, Awareness due to changing law status and Consequences of the de- and recriminalization regarding violence. These themes are divided into sub-themes, under which I present what the informants shared with me during the interviews and when suitable, adding some reflections. Furthermore, the results are analyzed using my theoretical framework. At the end of each sub-theme there will be a short summary of the main findings.

Before presenting the results, I want to clarify that when referring to the movement or the situation of LGBTQ people in these sections, it is through the informant's narratives and should not be seen as generalizable or as a general truth.

7.1. Being a LGBTQ activist in Mumbai

This first main theme concerns the informants own view of themselves as activists.

7.1.1 Different understandings of activism

In this theme I will present the different views of activism that were described by the informants (connected to the first research question). I believe that it is important to take part of the informant's own definition of activism. Furthermore, the mentor in Mumbai, discouraged me to not take the interpretation of activism for granted. Explaining that there might be informants that would like to be referred to as "individuals working with LGBTQ rights" instead of activist.

Actually, the informants did put different meanings into this kind of activity. When posed with the question of whether they would define themselves as an activist Gary responded:

I am an activist. Activism for me means helping, organizing and providing support for the gay, for the LGBTQ community (Gary).

Gary represents, in my view, the most simple and concrete description of activism. In contrast, the remaining informants tended to give more complex descriptions,

based on different grounds and interpretations. Some informants focused on activities carried out on an individual level. The following quote serves as an example of this view.

I do not know if I am an activist... But I do have my ways, like, I tell people about LGBTQ and I try to talk to them and convince them. Especially those people who still do not have any opinion about it. I also talk with my family, but not as an open homosexual person, trying to sanitize them (Patric).

One way to challenge the heteronorm is, according to Ambjörnsson (2006), in different ways undermine the norm as predominant. Patric describes how ze in everyday life try to challenge heteronormativity, although not necessarily defining this activity as an act of activism.

According to Carl, getting involved in activism, always starts from an individual level by approaching people in one's surrounding and try to 'sanitize' them (or as I understand it; to free someone from prejudices). However, Carl highlights that in order for these actions to be seen as legitimate, you first of all have to be open with your gender and sexual identity.

I find such a statement interesting, considering that roughly half of the informants do not meet these criteria's. Most of them live a "double life": they had "come out" to their friends but not to their families. However this did not seem to affect their definition of themselves as activists. This might indicate that there are different norms of who can be seen as an legitimate LGBTQ activist and who cannot. As raised by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992), different norms are created within the queer communities that construct the structure for the joint engagement, excluding those that fail to meet these norms. When emphasizing the importance of "coming out", Carl seems to describe this as a criteria, or norm, one have to meet in order to be seen as a LGBTQ activist.

For Mary, labelling oneself as an activist and claiming such a position, depend on how other view ze's actions.

I do not know if I am an activist, because the definition of activist is that people should perceive me as an activist. To some extent I have been

involved in a lot of LGBTQ rights, human rights and especially issues like HIV. I have done a lot of work and lobbying with different stakeholders. I have expressed my views to push for a political change. Also, being in this field as a researcher, I am gathering evidence to put in fore the politicians (Mary).

Even though Mary is hesitant to call himself activist, it is evident that ze challenge the institutions, laws, structures, relations and actions which sustain heterosexuality as the prevailing norm (cf. Ambjörnsson, 2006). Mary's hesitation might be due to a radical or negative view on activism in the Indian society, differing from my understanding of activism as a positive and empowering activity. In retrospect, it would have been interesting to pose a follow-up question, asking why Mary does not describe himself as an activist, when, in my view of activism, ze certainly would be defined as an activist.

The remaining informants, more explicitly, understood activism as an activity that should target social structures, and hence, focus on actions at an structural level.

I am an activist. I think activism is about questioning status quo, systems and structures that privilege some people [...] So activism is about recognizing the power of social structures that benefit a few and leave out most [...] So, I think there are sort of structures that support one way of being, how we define family, how we define institutions and all of that. So activism would be about questioning who gets left out and why, and broadening structures to include as many (Simone).

The informants that emphasized the importance of recognizing and challenging structures in society, all described themselves as activists. These informants argue that they have to understand and challenge structures that support the heteronorm. According to queer theory this is one of the main challenges in order to create a more inclusive society (Rosenberg, 2002).

In sum, based on my findings the definition of activism seem to derive both from a focus on an individual and a structural level. The connections that I were able to discern here are that those who work at a non-public arena were more prone to be hesitant about the "real" definition of activism compared to those who work in the public arena. In my interpretation this indicates that there might be a general

definition of activism as an activity that is performed on a structural level. Furthermore, I did not find any connections between whether the informant was a member of a LGBTQ organization or not and if they were more prone to define themselves as activists. Moreover, I did not discover any connections between the informant's class, age or sexual identity connected to the tendency of defining oneself as an activist.

7.1.2 The purpose of engaging in LGBTQ rights

In this section I will focus on why the informants engage in LGBTQ rights (connected to the first research question). I argue that it is important to explore their purpose in order to gain a deeper understanding of why they perceive the changing legal status the way they do, since this is likely to be connected to their purpose.

An interesting subject is the expressed driving forces behind activism, especially since activism in a country like India where certain acts are criminalized, could imply putting oneself at risk. As Dave (2012) points out, activism could be understood as an activity which is carried out despite of the risks it can involve because of the strong beliefs of obtaining justice.

One of the most common reasons for engaging in LGBTQ rights is exemplified below.

I am an activist because I am sure that the activism today will have an impact on the next generations to come. So that they not should have to go through the same shit as we did (Adam).

The majority of the informants raised that they are engaged in LGBTQ rights since they believe it will lead to a better future for the next generation of LGBTQ people. Similar motives were found among the activists who participated in Dave's (2012) study. In my interpretation the informants seem to believe that challenging the heteronorm today, might improve the chances of heterosexuality losing its hegemony in the future. However, this bright future will, according to them, not arrive within their lifetime. According to Kulick (2015), those who oppose the prevailing heteronorm in society are seen as a threat to its prevalence. This indicates that their active opposition might bring about positive changes in the future.

Other reasons for being an activist was connected to the objective of helping other LGBTQ people to “come out of the closet”.

I think that the fact that I am out makes it a lot easier for many other people to come out for me and share their stories. They think that I am someone who can be trusted and that I will be someone that understands what they are going through. So they kind of find some support system with me, which is important (Carl).

Carl seems to highlight the importance of providing support for other LGBTQ individuals by acting as a role model, using ze’s own experiences to provide hope for others. As explained in queer theory, one of the reasons for the heteronorm being seen as the predominant gender and sexual orientation is simply because it is the heteronormative gender and sexuality that is performed by the majority (Butler, 1990; 1993). Drawing from this, it seem as actions performed by the majority must be destabilized by the minority. One way might be to “come out of the closet” and get together and show themselves to the majority. Furthermore, without public representations of non-heterosexuals that challenge the norm, it is hard to imagine a forum for highlighting and discussing the issues that LGBTQ people struggle with.

7.1.2.1 Prospects of engagement connected to risks regardless of motive

The informants explained that opposition also involves risks, which could become reality whenever and wherever. For example, Adam explained that “you could be put in jail or something, maybe the mob will come and kill you”. In spite of being aware of these risks the informants saw the importance of being an activist, to fight for a better future. In the following I will view risks from the perspective of an inter-categorical analysis (Mehrotra, 2010), since the informants identify that some risks seem to be connected to different social categories.

Let us be honest, the risk for someone that is as privileged as me is not that big. I know that the fact that I am a journalist helps me as well. I think it is important to use your privileged position in your work (Gary).

In general the informants describe themselves as relatively privileged in comparison to other LGBTQ individuals in Mumbai. The informants raised the issue of privilege when talking about what kind of possibilities one has to engage in activism.

Different positions can be explained by taking social categories such as class, caste, education, and work among other things into account. These different social categories position them differently connected to level of risk (cf. de los Reyes, 2015). Thus, those who are already in a vulnerable position in society tend not to get engaged since they are, in that sense, less “equipped” to deal with risks.

From an intersectional perspective, these informants seem to recognize that it is easier for them to perform their gender and to assign themselves the responsibility to change norms due to their privileged position (cf. Mattson, 2015). Furthermore, they seem to recognize that you are given more opportunities to challenge the heteronorm if you are a part of social categories (such as education or a prestigious occupation) which puts you in a higher position in society. As mentioned by Ramasubban (2007), less educated LGBTQ activists are disadvantaged in the struggle against the law, which seems to conform Gary’s statement.

In contrast, Chris explained that being privileged does not automatically imply that you are less vulnerable.

I have many sexual partners, so my work as a lawyer, representing LGBTQ people, makes me vulnerable and them also. Because not all of them are out as LGBTQ. So maybe because of my work the government decides to get us, by their association with me [...] Some of my friends are a little defensive when they bring a date home. I have never been like "oh, that person might blackmail you". I have never been tricked. But I do understand that there is a certain amount of vulnerability to the entire exercise. You could have neighbors banging on the doors and saying: who the fuck is that, right? (Chris).

It is evident from Chris’s experience that even though ze belongs to a social category of civil rights lawyer (an occupation that usually put you in an advantageous position in society) Chris and ze’s close ones are, to some extent, at risk. In other words, having a higher position in society still comes with risks, since these risks are

connected to different situations. One's affiliation of social categories cannot protect you from unforeseen events, such as hostile neighbors (cf. Mattson).

Finally, Patric explained that ze was eager to get engaged in activism for LGBTQ rights but that ze, for several reasons, is unable to.

To be an activist, you must have your own room and a job. So once I am economically independent and I feel like I do not have my parents as head leaders, who are homophobic, I will be more visible. I would stand for something. I do not want the other generation to be as intolerant [...] You need to have a kingdom or some money, it is only then you should come out. Until that time you should be discrete about it, which I have to be right now (Patric).

From an intersectional perspective, the intersection that Patric is put in does not enable him to be an activist (based on ze's definition) right now (cf. Mattson, 2015). Although Patric belongs to upper-class, ze is unable to be an activist due to economic dependency, a social category that puts ze's in a position of being dependent on ze's parents. Thus, in this example economic independency serves as a prerequisite to be an activist. Furthermore, the power structures of homophobia are carried and exercised by ze's own parents, further preventing ze from joining the activist movement.

In sum, the informants highlighted that it is those that hold privileged positions in society, that has the opportunity and responsibility to pursue activism, not only for the less privileged LGBTQ persons but also for the future generations and for themselves. To pursue activism is, according to some informants, important regardless of one's positions in society since you are never free from discrimination and threats. What is also emphasized is the importance of acting as a role model in order to facilitate for others to "come out", which in turn is an important step in normalizing LGBTQ gender and sexualities.

7.1.3 LGBTQ activist's perception of norming within the LGBTQ community

In this section I will focus on how the informants experience that they are being perceived by other LGBTQ individuals (connected to the first and third research

question). As described by the informants, to be a LGBTQ person, does not always imply that one is accepted as a LGBTQ activist by other LGBTQ people. This has according to the informants not changed due to changes of the law. As I mentioned before, some of the informants argue that in order to be an activist you should be open with your sexuality. Furthermore, some informants highlighted groups within the LGBTQ community that criticize LGBTQ activists.

There are actually a lot of gay men that do not like activists, who says: why do you people act? They are saying that the law did not affect a lot of gay man earlier. That Bombay has always had gay men who had lived quietly and undercover and carried their lives, especially if you are rich, speak English and if you are from upper-class. Several of these rich upper-class gay men always say that: why do you have to change the law, no one is harassing us. It is activist like you who cause problems (Chris).

What Chris seem to describe here is how some LGBTQ persons (especially rich and English speaking individuals) have found some sense of security, even in their subordinated position in society, and therefore does not want the activists to challenge Section 377 (cf. Mattson, 2015). It seems like these men presents exceptions of the rule in order to claim that LGBTQ people in Bombay (Mumbai) have been able to live in peace in spite of Section 377. This should according to Mattson (2015) not necessarily be understood as power inequalities are absent. With reference to Mattson (2015), this might be seen as a way to vindicate oppression targeting LGBTQ persons. The criticism put forward by these men might also be seen as an attempt for them to protect their positions and conserve the societal order that they, to some extent (compared to other LGBTQ individuals), benefit from.

In addition, Gary highlighted other reasons for not being accepted or appreciated as an activist within the LGBTQ community.

Some people, usually less privileged people, think that I am a privileged man, who belongs to a higher class and caste and that I am doing activism to reduce my baggage. Because they think that activism is for privileged people that does not even need it. They think it is a selfish act (Gary).

What Gary, in my interpretation, describes here is that ze is not seen as a legitimate activist because ze is privileged. Thus, Gary's activism is not appreciated by less privileged LGBTQ people, since they rather than appreciating what connects them, tend to focus on what separates them (class and caste). They seem to experience a contradiction between a truly vulnerable LGBTQ person, an individual that really need the help of activists, and a LGBTQ person with the privileges of class and caste. Thus, social norms are created of who is seen as a legitimate member of the movement, showing a resemblance with the queer norm, excluding some individuals that do not fit the frame (cf. Haggren Idevall, 2011). I argue that the quote above show that the social category of class and caste might to some extent be perceived as an even more important issue than the fact that they essentially fight for the same cause. Such an interpretation results in class and caste being understood as a separating factor.

In addition I have identified other challenges which LGBTQ activists are faced with from other LGBTQ persons. According to Carl, sexuality are arranged hierarchically even within the LGBTQ community.

So basically I am a person that cannot be loyal, that I as a bisexual want the best of both gender. When people say that they identify as queer sexual, bisexual or pansexual then people within the community think that this is a person with no good fit. And it is even a bigger problem when you say that you do not believe in monogamy [...] I have two fears in life. The first one is dying when no one knows me, as I did not do any good work or contribute for the society. The second fear is dying alone. I really feel like it would be really difficult for someone like me to find someone to be with, or someone to find me and also love me and have sex with me for who I am (Carl).

Judging by Carl's statement, individuals that perform gender and sexuality in such a way that diverge a lot from the heteronorm are more likely to be stigmatized and subjected to social pressure (cf. Gemzöe, 2002). There seem to be more room for subversivity as long as you are attracted to one sex, and hence not bisexual. Thus, it is not only norms of gender that are challenged but also the norm of monogamy. Carl, as bisexual and polygamous, could therefore be seen as being dually

stigmatized, resulting in clashes between ze and others within the movement. Carl's experience might indicate that the movement, which ze is part of, is in need of interventions in compliance with LABIA's (2013) suggestions, securing that that all LGBTQ individuals are accepted as equal regardless of how they perform their gender and sexuality.

Furthermore, the informant's highlights that there are several norms within the LGBTQ movement, which according to other LGBTQ people, risks hurting the activist movement if not followed.

So one time when I where at the Pride parade with one of my partners, he is just like one of those masculine you know. He said to me "the Pride has become too feminine and too, you know transgender and now we need to assert that, the men are also here". So this is a problematic approach [...]
So another time when I were at the Pride parade I told another very close friend of mine that I am going to go and stand among the transgender to dance and play with them. And he turns around and says "no no, not with those queenies". And this is an activist friend (Chris).

In my interpretation, Chris explains that it might be problematic to perform in contradiction with one's assigned gender. That some gay men feel threatened by gay men who express themselves in a feminine way. This could be understood as, gay men who perform female attributes are less accepted than gay men with more male attributes, largely maybe because they diverge less from the heteronorm (cf. Rosenberg, 2002). Chris highlights, in accordance with intersectional theory, how individuals within the LGBTQ community can be placed in different social categories, such as "queenes", that are arranged hierarchically, making a distinction between "queenes" and other LGBTQ individuals (cf. Mattson, 2015).

The two previous quotes serves as good examples of how queer is never a fully inclusive concept, since norms are constructed for who can be identified as queer the very thing that queer theory objects (cf. Haggren Idevall, 2011). Furthermore, in Dave's (2012) study ze identified that the activists are to some extent forced to embrace the norms they want to deconstruct, inter alia the heteronorm. Subsequently, new norms are created out of this process. This might be understood as that the activists who partly embrace the heteronorm, by being monogamous or acting in

accordance with their assigned gender, dislike other activists who diverge more from the heteronorm. This disapproval might be due to that they could influence the movement negatively and its possibilities to reach acceptance because they are too divergent (cf. Kulick, 2005; cf. Butler, 2007).

Adam emphasized another issue that relates to the previous section.

Some people were so scared; they would not come and talk to me. In fact the closeted gay men are more defensive because they would not want to be seen together with an open gay guy, because that will just mean that people would connect A with B. Actually before I came out I were really homophobic because I was scared that people would suspect me being gay. I think that acting homophobic is pretty common before LGBTQ people are coming out of the closet (Adam).

Judging by what Adam describes here, there seems to be social and juridical forces (embedded in power structures) that prevents individuals that are not open with their gender and sexuality to join the movement. They are aware of the social sanctions one can be subjected to by being openly gay. Therefore, by performing homophobic, they might use this as a strategy to protect themselves from being classified as gay and hence avoid social pressure and repercussions (cf. Gemzöe 2002).

In sum, there seems to be a perception of who can be seen as a legitimate LGBTQ activist. As in the general society, the LGBTQ movement is characterized by structures of power (cf. Mattson, 2015). Such structures of power results in excluding the LGBTQ persons who does not fit into the perceived definition of an activist. This results in difficulties for individuals that do not fit the description of an activist to "happily" join the movement. I argue that this could be understood as a paradox since the LGBTQ movement criticizes the heteronorm for arranging sexualities hierarchically and to claim its primacy.

7.2. Awareness due to changing law status

In this second main theme I will present the main effects of the legal changes. In general all of the informants described that Section 377 being read down, and subsequently reintroduced, resulted in an increased attention and awareness of LGBTQ people and their situation. This increased attention and awareness is

generally described in positive terms but some of the informants also gave examples of negative consequences, hitting some LGBTQ individuals harder than others. In connection to this, I will touch upon the consequences for the activist movement and social attitudes surrounding LGBTQ community.

7.2.1 Implications for the LGBTQ activists due to changing law status

In what follows, I will present what kind of consequences the legal changes had for the LGBTQ movement, according to the informants (connected to the third research question). I will also present what these changes meant to them personally, in other words what implications this development had for their engagement in the movement.

When Section 377 was read down the general feeling within the LGBTQ community was, according to the informants, happiness. Simone even described this development as an “euphoria” and as a “big resurgence of LGBTQ voices, freedom!” However, other informants were less inclined to solely describe the decriminalization in terms of “freedom”.

So I think that this judgment allowed you to come out, a lot of people had come out and they were very happy with the judgment and they saw some positive signs. They said like “yes this is the first step as we go ahead discussing equality, marriage, adoption or maybe having insurance benefits to your partner”. But, the battle had yet to be continued, there was more to it. The social stigma would not disappear just because the law did. We all were very happy and thought like let us take this positive message and push it forward (Mary).

Judging from what is described by Mary, legal acceptance seems to be merely one important factor to achieve desirable societal changes. From the perspective of intersectional theory, legal acceptance opens up for the possibility to challenge the strong heteronormative power structures that limit LGBTQ persons’ rights. What is evident here is that, even though the formal power structure (the law) changed, Mary believes that, the informal power structure, in other words repressive social control and stigma, was still exercising power and control over LGBTQ people.

Theoretically speaking, the social category affiliation of LGBTQ people changed. Which in extension means that the intersection (the final position that a LGBTQ individual is placed in the societal hierarchy) opens up for the possibility to challenge other structures of power, which stands in the way for an equal society? Thus, the dynamics between social categories change when the status of one social category changes. In this case the social category, that LGBTQ people are put in, is no longer a category that is associated with illegal acts (cf. Mattson, 2015). In conformance with Geetanjali (2009), these informants seems to view the decriminalization as a first step for LGBTQ persons to “come out”, since they were no longer seen as criminals.

When it comes to the reintroduction of Section 377, surprisingly few of the informants saw this development as something purely negative. Rather, they described the effects of the reintroduction as ambiguous. However, the judgment came as a shock for several of the informants, since they thought that they were finally witnessing a positive development.

I think we all went back to 1860 that day. It broke a lot of faith. I think it was a lot of hurt for all the activist, you know... all these years of hard work, efforts, negotiations and lobby with just one judgment taking it away. So now we have first to take the law away before starting to negotiate other rights such as adoption (Adam).

Judging from Adam’s statement the legalization seemed to be appreciated as a tool for them to challenge and deconstruct social norms. However, now they were put in a different position, as criminals once again, which in turn affected other rights. In other words, the changing formal power structure of the law influenced their affiliation of social categories (cf. Mattson, 2015). Furthermore, this resulted in that they formally were viewed upon as abnormal again, since the heteronorm is institutionalized in this law. This resulted in a setback and they had to, according to Adam, start from the beginning by claiming their legal rights before being able to claim other societal rights.

7.2.1.1 LGBTQ activists experience of public support

Although some of the informants had concerns about the future after the decriminalization, they explained that these four years of legality resulted in a “larger platform for LGBTQ people to share views and experiences.”

It gave a huge push, suddenly there were parties being organized. Many things happened in these four years and it is still happening. That push came after 2009. There was nothing they could do to us. Freedom! Businesses started coming up, Pride is starting coming up in several cities. Which is brilliant! A lot more mobilization was happening, it was earlier only around HIV, but now there were just more social activities happening (Sara).

Even though the social stigma would not disappear as a result of the decriminalization, as described previously, this enabled public discussions about LGBTQ people and their rights to take place. This was also one of the conclusions made in the study of Prabhugate and Srivastava (2011). Moreover, the informants framed this public awareness as something genuinely positive for their community and for their activism. Sara’s statement could be interpreted as that the public awareness resulted in a possibility for the Indian society to understand the heteronorm as something that is not universal or desired by everyone (cf. Kulick, 2005). Furthermore, based on the quote above, I interpret that the decriminalization brought about an increased sense of safety that enabled them to carry out their activities more openly, and thus to expand to other social arenas where LGBTQ people were in need of support.

As mentioned previously, the reintroduction of Section 377 was viewed as a setback, however, the informants were ambiguous about the recriminalization’s practical implications. None of the informants viewed the recriminalization as something purely negative in retrospect. Instead they described the effects of the reintroduction as twofold. On one hand, some informants explained that they received unexpected support from the society when the judgement came in 2013.

So I think that after the judgement 2013 there was a lot of anger towards the state. It was very visible. So many people just came out. I think this

was in some way the first time that so many people who were not homosexual, who were scared people came out and supported us. They felt that this was unacceptable. This kind of climbing down on freedom was something that evoked massive response [...] Many candidates (to the governmental election) came out and said "If I come to power, I will do away with this law". So, in that sense there were many positive things that came because of that judgment (Simone).

The recriminalization seemed to have enabled a new institutional anchoring and expanded the area for the struggle of the activists, to a new political arena. The resistance was perceived as so big that the politicians started to view public opinion as a way to collect votes, which I argue says something about its extent.

What is also interesting to note here is that, according to the informants, it was not the fact that LGBTQ people were discriminated by law or the fact that the criminalization was a "climbing down on freedom", that upset people. It was first it got recriminalized that the public responded. Thus, it seem as if LGBTQ people had during these four years gained some kind of legitimacy in the eyes of some heterosexual individuals, making these changed norms visible only when they were broken (cf. Mattson, 2015). Moreover, these heterosexual individuals are relatively better equipped to challenge the heteronorm due to their position in the society. Resulting in that their support improved the circumstances and possibilities for the LGBTQ community to try to shift the societal norms (cf. Mattson, 2015).

On the other hand, some informants stressed that the status of the law did not imply that they could carry out their activities in public.

We have always to be careful, even when it was decriminalized, you cannot do it that openly. For instance, when we have movie screenings and I book locals in a college, I do not tell them that this is for gay and lesbians film. I just say that this is a film club, but they probably know but you do not say it (Gary).

This quote indicates that they were given some kind of "reserved acknowledgment", in other words, they were accepted as long as they were discrete (cf. Rosenberg 2002). Thus, other power structures than the law was still holding them back. In that way LGBTQ remained a subordinated group in society even during the period of

decriminalization, hindering them from causing a threat to the prevailing heteronorm.

7.2.1.2 LGBTQ activists developing new strategies

In contrast, some informants explained that they found a strength in the recriminalization. A strength that contributed to a “positive push” for the LGBTQ movement. They highlighted that the reintroduction to some extent led to a re-organization of their work. The informants refer to the judgement from 2013, in which LGBTQ people are addressed as a *miniscule* minority. This emphasis on *miniscule* resulted in efforts to “work on our community movement to show that we are not miniscule minority” (Mary). This in turn, contributed to the formation of new strategies, aiming at creating a movement where more individuals are included. Furthermore, this resulted in the widespread campaign of “No going back”, a pronounced attempt to broaden the movement.

By framing the LGBTQ community as a *miniscule* minority the informants interpreted this as an attempt to disempower LGBTQ people further. If this was the case it could be seen as an attempt to put LGBTQ people in an even lower position in society, by stating that they are very few and consequently strengthening the view of them as divergent (cf. Mattson, 2015).

As described by the informants, that advocate this new strategy, these efforts resulted in targeting groups and institutions in society that had not been targeted before.

We made efforts to reach the local district levels, rural areas [...] to show them that everybody is gay, no matter class, gender, caste or living status, urban or rural. So we took this message and asked local district to make their own voices, so now we wait to see what could be done [...] The judgment has wisely put the ball into the court of parliaments. So we also need to see how we can lobby with different stakeholders [...] Can we lobby with some members of the parliaments? Or at least start some negotiations or discussions? (Mary).

In the study by Ramasubban (2007) it was found that primarily upper-class and educated people from major cities were engaged in the movement against Section

377. This might serve as an explanation of why the court thought that they were a *miniscule* minority, not taking into account that LGBTQ people are spread all over India. Thus, the attempt to include more LGBTQ people coming from other classes and geographical areas was seen as an important strategy to challenge the judgement.

Judging by Mary's statement, the recriminalization, resulted in a more unified and specialized movement, by for example actively targeting people in powerful positions in society, such as local districts and the parliament. Thus, I can see how the recriminalization fed a more focused attempt to change the structures of power that they identified as disempowering LGBTQ people.

I argue that this development show similarities with the findings in Ramasubban's (2007) study. Ramasubban claim that the struggle against the law before 2009 resulted in a broader movement and the campaign "Voices against Section 377". This could be compared to what is happening now, the campaign "No going back" which is the new slogan after the recriminalization, bringing different groups together.

In addition, another new strategy that the reintroduction brought about was described by Gary.

We started to collect concrete evidence of what kind of consequences that Section 377 had for LGBTQ people, because in the judgment 2013, it is said that these law has never been abused or misused (Gary).

Here, Gary provides yet another example of a more systematic movement. They become more systematic by collecting evidence and writing reports in order to shape public opinion and to challenge the legal power structure. By providing these evidence the government cannot falsely claim that LGBTQ are not subjected to severe discrimination.

In sum, the informants had diverse opinions about what kind of implications the decriminalization had for their activism. Some informants claimed that the decriminalization did not affect them as activists while others presented a number of positive outcomes. Regarding the recriminalization they were however more unanimous. What is interesting to highlight here is that the recriminalization was

presented as a positive example of how they became more efficient in their work, developing new strategies.

7.2.2 Changing social climate due to changing law

In this section I will focus on what kind of changes the status of the law brought to the prospects of shifting the societal norm and to promote acceptance of sexual minorities (connected to the second research question). Before conducting the interviews I assumed that the reading down of Section 377 would gradually bring about social acceptance for LGBTQ people. However, I soon discovered that the equation was not that simple. Thus, in this part I will also present other structures of power (or factors imbedded in power structures) besides the law, that the informants identified as crucial in order to improve the social climate.

As mentioned previously, the changing status of the law, resulted in more awareness of LGBTQ people and their situation. The informants explained that after the decriminalization, people actually started to talk about other sexualities, rather than merely heterosexuality. This was due to increased media attention, which brought knowledge about that LGBTQ actually existed and that they have no legal rights. This resulted in, according to some of the informants, that LGBTQ people after the decriminalization could live more openly with their sexuality.

I heard stories about parents turning around and accepting their kids because of the court said so, which I thought was very interesting. People are very concerned about if it is legal or not. Because people do not understand these things. The courts have said it is okay, even some scientist, so they also thought it was okay (Chris).

Based on what Chris describes here, the decriminalization resulted in changes in attitudes at an individual level. This example highlights the law high influence and strong legitimacy, both when it comes to changing attitudes and producing discourses. In this example, I can clearly see how this formal power structure plays an important role in shaping the norms that, in turn, shape people's perceptions of sexual expressions and performances. This could be understood as, instead of questioning the formal power structure itself, which is rarely reflected upon, we

tend to question the individuals that do not comply with these norms (cf. Mattson, 2015).

In contrast, in the study of LABIA (2013), only three of fifty informants were able to live openly with their sexuality and be accepted after the law was read down. This experience was also reflected by some of the informants in present study. These informants pointed out that those four years “did not change people that much, it did not really matter” (Carl).

I mean our lives continue and our parties continue. In the same time people that were in the closet stayed in the closet. Because suddenly the law change does not mean that your family accepts you. The push that you have to marry someone of the opposite sex and have babies was still there (Gary).

What Gary, in my interpretation, describes here is that it is not enough to change laws regulating sexual acts when these acts are in opposition with institutions embedded in long traditions. Thus, these institutions hinder the development of changing social attitudes. This might serve as an example of Mattson’s (2015) description of how power structures operate on a general and structural level in society, but at the same time are sustained and reproduced by our institutions, actions and ideas. It seems as if, the general public are so accustomed to view heterosexuality as the prevailing norm, embedded in the institution of for example heterosexual marriage, that they therefore continue to reproduce these norms. Consequently, the decriminalization seems to be viewed as just one aspect of a larger battle against discrimination of sexual minorities corresponding with Dhall and Boyce (2015) result.

In contrast, other informants claimed that the legal changes “encouraged a lot of people, especially younger persons, to come out without fear for legal consequences” (Mary). Furthermore, Simone describes the benefits of the reintroduction and in what way these were visible on an individual level.

Many more people were much more easy about who they were. They were not hiding in their workplaces, in their homes, in their colleges or education institutions as much after 2009 (Simone).

Judging by Simone's statement, legal support was the deal breaker for some people in order to "come out". From an intersectional perspective, I suspect that these individuals belong to social categories that situate them in a social position that enable them to "come out". They might have had for example the support from family, enjoy economic independence or belong to a working environment that would support them and so on.

Other informants, inter alia Gary (see previous quote) disagreed. They claimed that, during these four years, only minor shifts in social attitudes towards LGBTQ people took place, resulting in LGBTQ people not being able to live openly with one's sexuality. Thus, the informants have different perceptions of what these four years actually meant.

In addition, Simone perceived these years as, "phenomenal, a celebration of differences which we were able to do openly in public."

There were so many more mainstream films talking about gay people. So you get to see yourself in like romance movies. You have got a side character whose best friend is a lesbian woman. So it is like so normalized. So, yeah that has been quite phenomenal (Simone).

Here, I again can see an example of the increased media attention that the decriminalization resulted in. But, I do however see a difference between media, highlighting LGBTQ issues for its news value, compared to movies for entertainment, in which queer people portrait the life of a queer person. Such media attention might send positive signals to a lot of people. Furthermore, that non-heterosexuals now could see movies that showed other sexualities than heterosexuals, indicate that non-heterosexuality now (in movies) was associated with romance instead of just abnormality.

The fact that non-heterosexuals now was moving into an arena that previously was dominated by heterosexual characters could be related to Butler's (2007) statement, that subversive repetition reveals the fact that the original is a construction. This might result in that queer identities enjoyed greater legitimacy.

Regarding the reintroduction of Section 377, Sara perceived it in positive terms: "I do not think that we would have the same type of acceptance today in the society

if the judgment would have been positive.” Furthermore, Patric went as far as stating that the reintroduction was imperative when it comes to the possibilities of challenging the societal norms.

The law does not really count, because nobody even knew about this law. In fact, some people say that they are happy that they criminalized homosexuality. Because if it still would have been legal nothing would have happened. People would just be happy and remain happy and then forget about it. But when they criminalized it again, it was like on a big newspaper front and everyone was talking about it. You see more people in the pride now compared to 2009 (Patric).

I distinguish an ambiguity in what Patric describes as the effects of the law. Interpreting Patric as claiming that the law does not have an effect (“the law does not really count”) but that it however has a large effect in changing social attitudes. Patric seem to associate the kind of effects the recriminalization had in raising awareness and the reactions it caused in society. Maybe this legal setback was followed by a sense of increased responsibility in society to fight the law. In my interpretation this might be the reason why Patric did not view the reintroduction in merely negative terms since they now were given a greater chance to challenge other structures of power.

In sum, the informants did not agree on what kind of consequences the changes in legal status had on the social attitudes, which LGBTQ people are subjected to. However, being LGBTQ when it is criminalized places all the informants in the same position; as criminal because of their sexuality. But at the same time, they are also being put in other positions depending on the affiliation of other categories and contexts. This results in that the informants are subjected to different levels and types of oppression, which can limit their opportunities to live their lives to the fullest. Furthermore, the informants all seem to view media as a positive factor which helped them to bring awareness about LGBTQ issues. As emphasized by Geetanjali (2009), if media reports responsibly on these issues, it could support a culture of tolerance of sexual and gender minorities.

7.3 Consequences of the de- and recriminalization regarding violence

In this third main theme issues of violence, affecting both the informants and other LGBTQ people's sense of security will be raised (connected to research question two). Focusing on, whether the informants experienced any differences in the prevalence of physical and psychical violence against LGBTQ individuals connected to the status of the law. My preconception was that physical and psychical violence should have started to decrease when the law was read down, but, did it really?

Some informants described that they saw a decrease in discrimination and felt safer when the law was read down.

Whoever came out after 2009 did it with a lot of confidence because there was nothing, or no one, that could hurt them. After 2009 they would not be subjected to any police harassment or anything because there was nothing in the law that would support such behavior. After the judgment a lot of people had come out because then they did not feel fear of being stigmatized, or being caught (Adam).

Judging by this quote, the police can be seen as an institution which upholds those structures that reproduce the view of LGBTQ people as a group that is legitimate to harass and discriminate. The fact that the police now lost its means to continue, show how the (legal) power structure lies beyond us on a structural level, but is at the same time upheld and exercised by the police (cf. Mattson, 2015). When these acts now were criminalized the sense of security increased among LGBTQ people, hence Section 377 highly influence the sense of security.

In addition, other informants explained that the decriminalization brought about positive changes regarding violence.

There were less cases of stigma and violence. People could start negotiated for their marriage, people could come out easily to their families and friends. Telling them that this is the court judgment and that they now had legally acceptance. The mental health was really good, people were freer and like, you could say no to violence because you had

something handy [...] So, I think that quality, dignity of life did improve and everyone was happy. But then it did not last for long time (Mary).

In comparison to the other informants, Mary describes a relatively direct and basic effect of the decriminalization. Consider for example expressions such as “come out easily” and “everyone was happy”. Decreased stigmatization might indicate that attitudes have changed as a result of the decriminalization. These changes also lead to a more favorable environment that seemed to have a positive effect on the physical health of LGBTQ people. Which indicates that the law represented a strong power structure also when it comes to violence and stigmatization against them. This experience of decreased violence and stigma, is in line with the result presented in Prabhugate and Srivastava (2011) study.

Regarding the reintroduction of Section 377, the informants tended to present a quite divergent view of the development of violence. On one hand they explained that the recriminalization resulted in an aggravated situation.

More people were being blackmailed when caught in the act of doing something that was against the law. I was expecting a backlash but I did not expect that people would be beaten up at parties. Nobody cared about the Section 377 before this, but now it was terrible (Chris).

I interpret Chris’s statement as, when the existence of Section 377 got more known, so did the existence of LGBTQ people. Hence, what ze describes here is a backlash of awareness. In other words, this awareness did not only result in positive changes (as discussed previously). Instead some informants claimed that the prevalence of violence has increased as the public got more aware of LGBTQ and their struggle. Thus, I can see how more awareness of a vulnerable group in society is not necessarily a good thing.

On the other hand, other informants were more cautious about describing the perceived prevalence of violence as connected to the status of the law.

Before 2009 there were many cases where people were being blackmailed by people that were finding evidence and saying that it is against the law. In those four years of decriminalization that decreased a lot. But now it

has started to rise again. But it is probably not more than before 2009. But we do not know, because a lot of those people who are getting blackmailed do not want to talk about it (Sara).

Sara perceived (in contrast to Chris), that the reason for the perception of increased violence might not be due to an actual increase. Thus, Sara highlights that we cannot be sure of whether the violence actually has increased or not. Here, the process of stigmatization may explain why there might be an estimated number of unknown cases. Since, being faced with violence seems to be stigmatized, this results in people being less inclined to report violence and thus it might be hard to estimate. Judging from Sara's statement, it seems like the formal power structures, such as the law, has a huge impact on the informal power structures, leading to less cases of harassment and blackmailing.

Some informants build on this statement and explained that:

After the law being read down, there were more discussions about the violence that is happening. This makes the violence more visible and people more aware about it [...] It has just been supported more by media, especially after 2013. So we might feel like that the violence has increased but I think it is the same (Gary).

What Gary highlights here is that increased media attention does not necessarily imply an actual increase in the prevalence of violence. Thus, the violence against LGBTQ people received more attention in media might have resulted in a distorted picture.

7.3.1 Violence targeting different subgroups of the LGBTQ community

When talking about issues of violence, the informants all stated that there are differences between individuals identified as LGBTQ and transsexuals. This is due to different societal attitudes against these groups.

In society it is believed that transgender is something that you get when you are born. So they always had sympathy for them. In general, if you

see the attitude of people in India it is a far much better for transgenders as compared to the homosexuals. Although, I will not say that it is a good attitude. Homosexuals are seen as a choice, as something perverse, and a rich man western thing. In 2014 the transgenders got a positive judgement, which I feel like an attempt from the judges, trying to compromise to our bad judgement in 2013 (Adam).

According to queer theory, sexuality is socially constructed in specific historical and cultural contexts (Butler, 1990). Hence, transgender might be more accepted due to their somewhat different historical and cultural anchoring (being send from god), whereas for example homosexuality has a different history and is seen as a perverse choice. Considering that some seem to view transsexuals as send from god, their subversity of performed heteronorm, does not seem to be perceived as something that deviate as strongly from the highly normalizing heteronorm. They are therefore not subjected to as severe social pressure in comparison to other *LGBQ* (cf. Gemöze, 2002). This could also be referred to what Rosenberg (2002) emphasizes, that heteronormativity is built upon two leading principles: the exclusion and inclusion of divergence. Which in this case mean; include transsexuals as something quite normal and exclude *LGBQ* individuals as abnormal.

At the same time, Sara explains that transsexuals are even more vulnerable in comparison to other *LGBQ* individuals.

The violence is seen especially towards the less privileged. Transgender people, for instance, are at constant threat of violence and rape at the hands of the state machinery. The intersection between gender and sexuality, caste and class cannot be understated. Even within the *LGBTQ* community there are privileged sections that are relatively less touched by the atmosphere of violence that surrounds us, which is important to be aware of when talking about the *LGBTQ* people's situation (Sara).

Sara is clearly demonstrating an intersectional understanding since ze claims that we need to investigate in what way different social categories influence each other. Such an understanding is from an intersectional perspective important in order to get an coherent picture of the violence that *LGBTQ* people are subjected to (Mattson, 2015). In previous quote Adam also showed an understanding of this kind

of perspective, when claiming that different subgroups have different prerequisites for enjoying social acceptance in society, which also influence to what extent an individual is subjected to violence. Thus, it is important, when raising issues of social attitudes and violence, not to view LGBTQ people as a homogenous group.

The informants explained that since they are relatively privileged, due to inter alia class and caste, they are less subjected to violence. In the study of Prabhughate and Srivastava (2011) they found similar results. Stating that the effects of the decriminalization were perceived differently depending on which sexuality and gender subgroup one belonged to. However, during the years of legality, no LGBTQ individual could ever feel completely safe. Patric shares an experience from ze's previous University.

In my previous University there was a professor, I liked him and people made a video where he was having sex with a guy. So, that was like published everywhere. Yeah, it was just before 2009 and after this judgment, they just... ah challenged it in the court and the professor won because homosexuality was legalized, but after two months he was mysteriously killed (Patric).

This quote indicates that, in spite of class or privileged position in society, LGBTQ people are never safe. But, one can assume that privileged people are better equipped for being active and public. However, legal status does not seem to protect even privileged people. This quote could qualify as an extreme example of how strongly rooted the heteronorm is among some individuals, assigning themselves the responsibility, to eliminate diverging individuals that do not follow the heteronorm (cf. Gemzöe, 2002).

In sum, whether the changing status in law resulted in a decrease or an increase in violence is debated by the informants. One explanation might be that the prevalence is hard to measure, since they suspect that a lot of cases of abuse are not reported. However, some of the informants stated that the violence has become more visible, which might result in that people think it has increased. With this in mind; what kind of implications does this have? Could this result in further stigmatization of LGBTQ people and that LGBTQ people are afraid to "come out" due to perceived high level of violence? Or might this perception of increased violence result in an

actual increase of violence, running the risk of normalizing violence against LGBTQ people?

Furthermore, an understanding that was shared by all the informants is that class, caste, gender and sexual identity, in addition to the legal status, influence to what extent a LGBTQ individual is vulnerable. If an individual perform gender far from one's assigned gender, in opposition to the heteronorm, ze run the largest risk of social pressure (cf. Gemöze, 2002).

8. Summary

In this section I will reconnect to the research questions of this study: How do LGBTQ activist perceive and describe their activism and motives for engaging in activism? How do LGBTQ activists' perceive that the legal changes have influenced the situation of LGBTQ people? How do LGBTQ activists perceive that the legal changes have influenced their prospects to perform their activism? The main aim of this study was to explore how LGBTQ activists in Mumbai perceived and were influenced by the relatively rapid change of Section 377, focusing on the period between 2009 and 2015.

The informants have different motives for engaging in LGBTQ rights and defined activism differently. I was not able to distinguish any clear connections between their definition of activism, their different motives for engaging in LGBTQ rights and how they perceived the changes of the law. However, what is evident from the results presented here, is that there rather seem to be norms within the LGBTQ movement that influence individual's relation to the movement, which I will discuss in next section.

Furthermore, the informants seem to view the implications of Section 377 in a similar way, stating that the law indeed impedes the rights of LGBTQ people. But, as presented in the previous sections, the legal status is far from the only element that is important to take into consideration, when it comes to the situation of LGBTQ people and their activism. What is evident is that the law, according to the informants, could have very different consequences for each LGBTQ individual/activist. For some people, the law being read down only implied that they were no longer legally considered as criminals. For others this resulted in the possibility to live openly with their sexuality, referring to that it now was legal. Furthermore, one informant claimed that nobody really cares about such an old law (written by British colonists). In contrast, other informants assigned the law an imperative role, which for many resulted in that their parents accepted their sexual identity after the decriminalization.

Moreover, my results show that the change in prevalence of violence, connected to the status of the law, is a debated topic. However, the informants agreed that the four years of freedom resulted in less blackmailing, but also less harassment by the police, since harassment now lacked legal support. They also agreed that these years

did not give rise to the social changes necessary, since such changes takes more time. But still, Section 377 being read down is seen as a prerequisite for being able to claim other societal rights.

The informants explained that the rapid legal changes resulted in highlighting the LGBTQ community and their struggle against Section 377. Media played an imperative role in raising awareness, resulting in a broader public engagement. Some informants even described the recriminalization as a prerequisite for changing social attitudes against LGBTQ people. However, the recriminalization also brought negative attention, as the law now served as a reason for discrimination. Those individuals that “came out” with the law as their main assurance became even more vulnerable when Section 377 was reintroduced, since they lacked other assurances, such as family support, which could act as a protection from harassment and/or oppression.

Regarding how the legal changes have influence their activism the results point in different directions. Some informants explained that for the LGBTQ activists, the recriminalization resulted in a number of positive outcomes. This was a starting point for the development of new strategies, attempts to include more people in the movement and to show that they are not a miniscule minority. They also gained increased support from non-LGBTQ people. Furthermore, during the governmental election in 2014, more politicians had LGBTQ issues on their agenda. Whatever the reason, their issues now entered a new (political) arena. On the other hand, there were informants who claimed that the changing legal status did not affect what kind of activities they could carry out in public. They could continue doing what they had always been doing, but always with caution and underground.

9. Concluding discussion

In this section I will discuss the most interesting findings, some of them represent gaps or issues that I would like to discuss further. Moreover, I have identified a number of similarities and differences connected to previous research.

9.1 Decriminalization and its consequences for different subgroups

To begin with, in compliance with Prabhughate and Srivastava's (2011) study, the results of present study indicate that the decriminalization affected various subgroups of the LGBTQ community differently. However, the findings in this study indicate that it is not only sexuality and gender that determine the consequences Section 377 has for LGBTQ activists. For some activists it became palpable, during the legal period, to what extents the affiliation of one's social categories influence their possibilities. The fact that Section 377 was read down was not the deal breaker in being able to live openly with one's sexuality. Other social aspects were more or less important for each individual, such as being dependent on one's family economically, education and the lack of a supporting network.

The general findings in present study indicate that what consequences the status of the law has for activists in Mumbai, is largely dependent on their different affiliations of social categories and which social context they are located in. Thus, in what way an individual is affected depends on the position (the sum of social categories and social context that is hierarchically arranged), ze has in society. However, regardless of one's position in society, the possibility of being exposed to risks is always a reality (see for example the professor that was murdered). Thus, it is not enough to secure the legal rights of LGBTQ people, other factors remain, according to the informants, more or equally important. As a social worker, this result indicates that it is evident to work on several levels at the same time. It is not enough for social workers to only ensure the legal rights of LGBTQ individuals. Other areas are equally important to target for reaching societal changes when it comes to norms surrounding the situation of non-normative sexualities.

In addition to Prabhughate and Srivastava's study (2011), this study also investigates in what way the recriminalization affected different subgroups in the

LGBTQ community, which seem to be a relatively unexplored field. The findings here might serve as an initial step, from an intersectional perspective, in understanding the effects of the reintroduction of Section 377. Furthermore, the result presented here can be used as an indicator of which LGBTQ group's social workers in India and maybe in Sweden need to support more.

9.2 LGBTQ activists experiences of obstacles within the LGBTQ movement

The results of the present study show similarities with Ramasubban's study. Ramasubban (2007) describes how the opposition to the law brought together groups with alternative sexualities in a more "organized" movement. Such a development has, according to some of the informants, dramatically escalated as a result of the recriminalization. The informants described that the recriminalization resulted in a more strategically organized movement, actively trying to broaden the spectrum and include more people since they, as in Ramasubban's study (2007), found it problematic that educated activists working in big cities dominated the movement. They therefore targeted people belonging to different social positions in society, such as lower-class, non-English speaking, less educated, people from rural areas etcetera, to prove that they are not a miniscule minority (as it was stated in the judgement).

Another theme that I would like to discuss further is, building on Dave's (2012) study, how different norms are inevitably constructed in the LGBTQ movement. The informants in present study were able to identify several excluding processes within the movement. For example, according to some of the informants, the fact that sexual and gender identities are arranged hierarchically, results in some LGBTQ activists being excluded and subjected to stigma from (members of) the LGBTQ community. For instance, bisexuality and polygamy seems to represent basis of exclusion. In addition, the informants state that some LGBTQ activists are criticized for not having anything to do with LGBTQ rights, since they enjoy a relatively privileged position in society. Thus, besides sexual and gender identity, belonging to class determine one's position and probability of being appreciated as a legitimate activist. This result in the risk of excluding those LGBTQ activists who does not fit into this definition of an activist. Which indicate that power structures,

such as norms, are dynamic and always spread in unexpected ways. These excluding processes are something that social workers, in both India and Sweden, can discuss within those movements which aim to strive for societal inclusion. Social workers could try to help the LGBTQ activists in India to create a more inclusive movement with partial knowledge derived from this study and from the research of LABIA (2013).

In compliance with Dave (2012), I argue that this kind of development is problematic from a queer theoretical point of view that activists which struggle is about challenging and deconstructing excluding norms, as a matter of fact, are constructing new (excluding) norms. These results made me reflect upon what kind of consequences this processes of normalization (excluding norms) has. What is it really, that the LGBTQ activists ultimately normalize through their movement? As evident in Dave's (2012) study, there is a difference between the activists expressed ethical reasons for engaging in activism and the actual outcome of such an engagement. This is due to that they, in challenging these norms (for example the heteronorm or the institution of marriage), are forced to partially embrace them, and in this embracement new norms are created/invented.

I argue that this is reflected in my results, since it is showed that those activists who did not subverse far from the heteronorm were less subjected to social pressure (invented a new way to perform as, for example, a gay man). Are these individuals unconsciously compromising their “true” sexuality/gender? Can structures of power, such as monogamy, be assigned the responsibility for these “compromises”? Or, it is rather that they partly have to embrace monogamy in order to succeed with the objective of their activism (ethical reasons)? Furthermore, does this imply that my belief that the LGBTQ movement would benefit from an increased inclusiveness in other words, to reach the expressed ethical objective of their activism, is an utopia?

Moreover, what are the dangers of viewing the LGBTQ movement as a social group? To be frank, I have, during the process of this study, imposed some normalizing ideas of how their movement should be organized, in other words, that it should be an including movement. Maybe, it is better to frame the LGBTQ movement as a movement that, rather than aspiring to include as many LGBTQ individuals as possible (from different class, caste etcetera), is about joining all

those who struggle against discrimination on the basis of sexual and gender identity?

9.3 Increased awareness in connection with the de- and recriminalization

According to Geetanjali (2009), the decriminalization brought about several positive developments. In this study, however, the consequences of the decriminalization are ambiguous. Some of the informants claimed that the decriminalization implied only minor changes for them as activists. However, such a perception might be due to the fact that, (in contrast to Geetanjali's study), that the informants in present study, have experienced the recriminalization and are therefore able to compare the different outcomes.

Geetanjali (2009) argue that the increased visibility of LGBTQ issues is imperative in order to reform public opinion. The recriminalization (somewhat unexpectedly) brought, according to some of the informants, positive effects when it comes to societal awareness of LGBTQ issues. One of the informants even claimed that some LGBTQ individuals were happy to see the reintroduction of Section 377, since this event resulted in increased awareness. I therefore argue that as a social worker it is important to continue to work for awareness about LGBTQ sexualities in a responsible way. This could be done by for example writing articles or by participating in different debates about these issues.

In Prabhugate and Srivastava's (2011) study they describe how the decriminalization resulted in that people were more open to speak about sexuality and sexual preferences. Based on my findings, such a development accelerated in connection with and after the recriminalization. The positive outcomes raised, by some of the informants, may appear contradictory. These contradictions are however interesting and seems to be a quite unexplored field of research.

What can be concluded here is that the consequence of the changing status of Section 377 is neither obvious nor self-evident. As stated in Ramasubbans's study (2007), a number of events escalated the activist struggle and resulted in unifying different groups in the movement. The opposition against the law is also mentioned as an unifying factor. For example, the campaign "Voices against Section 377" unified several groups before the decriminalization and now the campaign "No

going back” is gathering different organizations yet again. According to the informants, the recriminalization (in comparison to the decriminalization) was the event that truly escalated the development. Does this indicate that (further) setbacks or obstacles might empower the movement even more, resulting in increased power of action and possibilities in the future? Could the recriminalization therefore be understood as one step backwards results in two steps forward?

To sum up, the present study has demonstrated the importance of and benefits that can be derived by studying the LGBTQ community as a heterogeneous group. It is evident that the informants in this study have various experiences of in what way Section 377 has influenced their everyday life, their activism, the movement and the community itself. Finally, the present study shows that it is difficult to anticipate what elements that can be considered crucial for the development and success of the LGBTQ movement. However, my results show that both the struggle to get Section 377 read down and the reintroduction of the law, brought positive effects of high value to LGBTQ activism, as strange as that may seem.

9.4 Suggestions for further research

There are many interesting topics in the present study worth elaborating on, some of which I already mentioned above. Below follows a selection of issues that I suggest for further research.

- To further explore why not everyone (LGBTQ activist) is given space or take place within the LGBTQ movement.
- To explore which groups or individuals that is not represented in the Indian LGBTQ activist movement.
- To investigate how the reintroduction of Section 377 has affected particular groups (connected to different social categories) within the LGBTQ community.

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Appendix 1

Information about the study

We are two students from the University of Gothenburg, Sweden, who are studying to become social workers. We will arrive in Bombay in the beginning of October and our hopes are to collect data for our bachelor study. The issue of interest is LGBTQ activism in Mumbai and the effects of the reading down and re-introduction of Section 377.

The aim of this study is to explore how LGBTQ activists in Mumbai perceived and were influenced by the rapid change of section 377. We want to get an insight in what consequences the change of law has implied for LGBTQ activists in Mumbai.

The entire study builds upon interviews with LGBTQ activists to learn about their insights and experiences connected to activism. The interview will last maximally 60 minutes.

The information that we will receive is going to be handled confidentially with no risk for any participants to be recognized. We are open for suggestions regarding where the interview should take place. When the study is finished, we will send you a copy of the result.

We would greatly appreciate your participation, if you have any further questions about the study or us, you are welcome to contact us. You can reach us via e-mail:
gusahlvmi@student.gu.se, gusrittean@student.gu.se

Appendix 2

Informed consent

I would like to participate in an interview conducted by Michaela and Anika from University of Gothenburg, Sweden. I understand that the project is designed to gather information about LGBT activists' perception of the change of Section 377 and LGBTQ person's life conditions for a minor field study.

The participation in this project is voluntary. There will be no payment for the participation. I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty. If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.

Participation involves being interviewed and the interview will last approximately 60 minutes. Notes will be written during the interview. An audio tape of the interview will be made.

I will not be identified by my name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure. The uses of data will be subject to standard data use policies which protect the anonymity of individuals and institutions. No one else will have access to raw notes or transcripts.

The information in this document is given to you as a participant before the interview. By agreeing to the content in this document we assume that you agree to participate until further notice.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time. Contact information: Michaela gusahlvmi@student.gu.se or Anika gusrittean@student.gu.se or call 9867 XXX XX.

Appendix 3

Interview guide

Interview subject and supplementary questions

We do not want to make any assumptions about the gender identity that you define yourself with and therefore we want to ask you what kind of pronoun you prefer.

Questions about the person's activism

1. Do you define yourself as an activist? Why? Why not?
-How would you define activism and what does it mean to you personally?
2. For how long have you been an activist/working with issues related to sexual rights?
3. Are you a member of any organization, and if so which organization?
-Which terms or names does your organization use for its members?
4. How is this activist movement organized? (How do you meet, how often etcetera)?
-Who is involved in the activist movement organized against section 377 in India?
5. How do you and the members of your organization keep in contact with each other? Did this kind of contact change as the law was read down, and if so in what ways?

Questions about how the person views the law

6. How did the process look like leading to that section 377 was read down?
7. In what ways do you experience that the change of the law has influenced you as an activist and as a person in 2009, 2013 and now?
changes (what kind of changes),
8. What have these last four years, when the law was read down, meant to you as an activist and as a person (mention positive and negative things)?

Information about issues regarding everyday life

9. Could you describe your living situation? (Can you be open with your Sexuality? Family/employment)
10. Does your sexuality affect your relationship with family, friends and colleagues at work, and if so in what ways?
11. Does your activism affect your relationship with family, friends and colleagues at work, and if so in what ways?
12. If there are any difficulties connected to the two previous questions, how do you handle these difficulties?

Issues regarding safety in relation to activism and sexuality (from individual to societal level)

13. Do you have any bad experiences associated with your role as an *activist* and if so, could you describe them?
14. Do you have any bad experiences associated with your *sexuality*, and if so, could you describe them?

15. Have you experienced a change in the level of violence and/or harassment directed at LGBT persons (or you) before 2009, in between 2009 and 2013, after 2013 until now?

16. Do you feel insecure or fearful due to your activism and/or sexuality, and if so in what way?

17. Are there activities that you cannot carry out as an activist/ person who works with issues related to sexual rights, because of its illegal status?

-How do you view the fact that you are doing something illegal/ breaking the law?

-How does it feel to fight for LGBT persons rights even though there are risks involved in the work?

Issues regarding status in society

18. How would you describe others view on you as an activist/a person working with issues related to sexual rights?

19. When the law was read down, did you feel free to be more open about your sexuality?

20. Did this change as the law was reintroduced, and if so in what ways?

-Do you experience a shift in the societal norm regarding different sexual preferences (2009, 2013 and now)?

21. Do you experience different treatment from different levels of society depending on the status of section 377?

-For example treatment by police, religious groups or depending on the location?

Issues regarding the future

22. In your opinion, what are the possibilities that the law will be read down again, and if so when will that happen?

-What are the prerequisites and what is required for reading down the law again/permanently?

23. Is there anything else that you think we should take into consideration in our study? What is important to you when talking about these issues, section 377 and LGBT activism as a whole?

Thank you very much for your participation!